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BY WILLIAM T. NICHOLS, *Author of "My Strange Patient," "A Whim and a Chance," etc.*
COMPLETE.



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JUNE, 1897

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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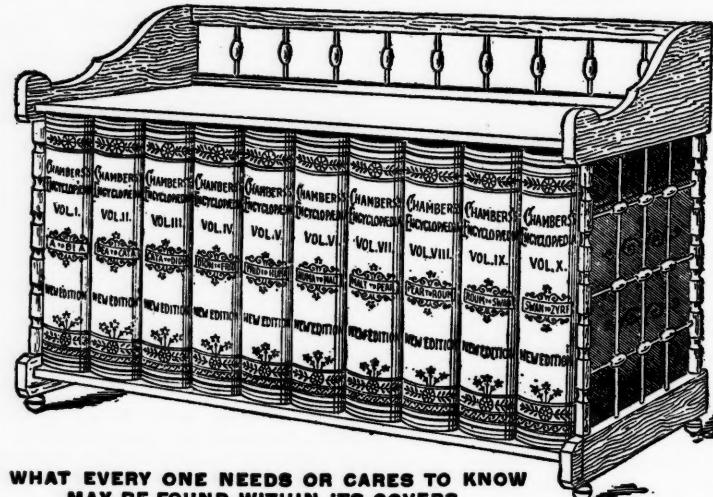
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Where is the celebrated Castle of Chillon, immortalized by Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon"? Vol. III., page 181.

What Central American Governments constitute the Greater Republic of Central America, as officially recognized by President Cleveland, December 23, 1896. Vol. III., page 64.

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AS ANY GENTLEMAN MIGHT.

BY

WILLIAM T. NICHOLS,

AUTHOR OF "MY STRANGE PATIENT," "A WHIM AND A CHANCE," ETC.

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AS ANY GENTLEMAN MIGHT.

I.

IT had come to be my custom to take the air daily in the walled garden behind Dame Martha's house. 'Twas a poor place, but not to be despised, its limits being those of my liberty. A dozen paces from north to south, or half as many from east to west, and I was at the barrier hedging me in from the rest of the world, a barrier which a sick man might have scaled, and which I, a fairly active fellow, could have vaulted from a stand-still. Only a vague thing called honor (which no one can define quite to his own satisfaction, let alone that of others) held me back, a prisoner of the sort for whom there is no hope of rescue. For I was my own jailer. My word was given not to stir abroad, and there was in me no thought of breaking the pledge. Young as I was, I had learned to disesteem a liar, for whom present ease can be but the father of future difficulties. And this I saw as clearly at one-and-twenty as I see it now, when my years are more than thrice as many.

Nevertheless, though I might not le vant, retirement was sorely galling. Beyond the walls were fair fields and cool woods ; within were sickly turf and long-abandoned flower-beds, with a winding path leading among them and on to a stunted tree in a far corner, shading a rustic bench so old and worn that it rocked and grumbled beneath one's weight, yet held together like the honest bit of British workmanship it was. Under this tree I passed hours and hours, meditating upon my sins and repenting them in reasonable measure, with certain regrets for their occurrence, but more for the consequences they entailed ; which, it may be, is the manner in which most mortals do penance. On the whole, the task was weary, and I longed to have it done with and out of mind. As a person of principle I could not but perceive the dangers of excessive atonement, reflection upon my misdeeds bearing somewhat monotonously upon my conscience, keeping it unduly busy

and also adding the risk of making it callous, as hands often grow, from too much labor. Therefore, as was but inevitable with both inclination and philosophy to oppress me, and with a thoughtful eye to future good conduct, I grieved at the slow passage of the days which lay between me and freedom.

I had retired one afternoon to my favorite post (if there may be a favorite when the choice is restricted to one), and, going over oft-repeated calculations, had reached the cheering conclusion that in forty-eight hours the parole obligation would have expired. I was idly weaving plans—but perhaps, rather than take them up (they were never carried out), I should set forth, at this point, enough to make clear the undeserved misfortune which had been mine, and which had sufficed to make a free-born American as good as a prisoner to an English quarter-acre or less. My parents had died in my infancy, and my surviving relatives, excellent Boston folk,—though it be I who say this,—had cared for the orphan dutifully enough, but scarce wisely; for they failed to understand what should have been evident to them from the first, that though of the same blood I had naught else in common with them. They tried to train me as they themselves had been trained; they burdened me with precepts; they made my life a weary waste of schools, of early rising, of this rule and that rule and I know not how many others. So much was forbidden that it was hard to tell what I longed for most. When at last, with many regrets but truly driven to desperation, I refused further to be sacrificed, they wept over me, and thrust me into a vile counting-house, whence I escaped only after a painful scene, which, knowing it to be inevitable, I hastened out of regard for the feelings of all concerned. Then, for a time, I was left in peace and tranquillity.

I have just said that peace was won, yet 'twould be better to amend and call the peace comparative. My relatives were full of upbraidings, which they poured upon me in season and out; all of which I bore with placidly, for their discourse might ease their spirits, while it caused me but passing annoyance. Inasmuch as no effort was made to drive me into another uncongenial walk in life, I endured their hard words patiently, whereat they often became most unseemly enraged, losing all self-control and prophesying for me many unpleasant fates, in most of which the gallows figured. There is no cause to recite the epithets which fell upon my head in what they aimed to be an overwhelming flood, but which was, at the worst, a mere pattering drizzle. My majority was near at hand, and at twenty-one I should be my own master. Meanwhile they might say their say till their jaws ached.

At last the great day came. My small heritage was turned over to me with doleful predictions that it and I would soon part company. That night I supped with a few choice souls. What happened was nothing worth recording, but in the morning, while yet I lay abed in the tavern wherein we had held gentle revelry, there came to me one Richard Warbeck, a limb of the law and by odds the gayest of the party who had sat together a few hours before. He bore a long face of his own and a short note from the uncle who had been my guardian. I read the single page with some difficulty; for my brain was oddly sluggish.

"Well, Dick," said I, "what's all this pother, and what is it all about? My uncle writes things I fail to comprehend,—'scandal,' 'outrage,' 'disgrace to the family.' I've passed over much abuse of the sort by word of mouth, but put in writing—and me of age!—why, Dick, I fear I can't overlook the insult. Now, as to last night's doings—"

"Jack," he said, hastily, "Jack, my boy, will you heed me? I've led you astray, and a burning reproach to me it is. The story is town talk; your family are beside themselves with wrath and shame. This morning, acting in your interest, I went to your uncle. He would not listen to me, but gave me this letter. He'll concern himself no more with your affairs."

"Good!" I cried, sitting up in bed; "and if he'd reached that sage decision long ago 'twould have been still better. But what's your advice? Shall I ignore his conduct, or shall I call him to account? A libellous writing is no small matter."

"This is my counsel, Jack," he answered, pulling a longer face than ever: "leave this town and go beyond seas."

Now, 'tis faulty generalship to show surprise,—that is, when the feeling exists. So I said, "When?" as coolly as if Dick had suggested another supper, or such light diversion.

"At once," he answered, with a gravity he was never to surpass, though afterward he sat upon the bench of a high court.

"Oh, very well," said I, clambering out of bed slowly and somewhat painfully, for my limbs were afflicted with a curious stiffness. "I've often longed to tour foreign parts."

"The Pioneer sails at noon, wind and tide permitting," said he.

"A good ship," said I. "The choosing of her does you credit. I doubt, however, whether my funds—"

"I'll arrange all that," he cried; and presently he had put in my hands close upon five hundred pounds, in English notes and gold, and I had signed certain papers, by virtue of which he was authorized to deal with my property as with his own, forwarding such other sums, above the advance money, as might result from its sale. And so it came about that I, with neither farewells nor reproaches to the kin who had been so unkind, sailed for England, arriving there in due season and settling myself in London to polish mind and manners by the friction of a vast city. There had I tarried for several months, when a mischance befell me.

Just how began the argument which led up to the trouble I do not recollect, but all of a sudden, as it were, I found myself in hot debate with a youth upon whom I had never before set eyes. We were in a club much frequented by men of fashion, and among those about us were certain ones whose good opinion was to be valued. From words we passed to deeds: a decanter was on the board before me; provokingly convenient; his choice was a tankard. The next day I awoke to learn that a formal meeting for a continuance of the discussion had been arranged. There was, as I recall, considerable difficulty in deciding who was the aggrieved party, but the seconds generously waived insistence upon so minor a point. Swords were

selected, by mutual consent, and on the second morning Mr. Robin Hawes—for such, upon inquiry, proved to be his name—and I came together on a fine sheltered stretch of greensward whither gentlemen frequently resorted.

Of the duel I care to say little. Neither my opponent nor I was master of the shining steel: hence we made short work of our undertaking. His point cut open my cheek, mine pierced his right shoulder. His seconds bore him away in one direction, mine hurried me off in the other. Two days I lay *perdu*, nursing my wound, which was trifling, save in that it promised to leave a scar. On the third Mr. Elijah Best, to whom friends had borne tidings of my flight, was my visitor.

This Mr. Best was a person of substance and mercantile repute, who had many dealings with the States, and was the factor through whom I received the money sent by Richard Warbeck; for the original five hundred pounds had vanished like a dam through which the water has made a crevice. A grave, stern man was Mr. Best, who on more than one occasion had grown wearisome with his admonitions. Now he sat him down beside me, preaching from the worn old text, until I, with all my innate courtesy to my seniors, felt my patience ebbing.

“Sir, I admit the error,” I said at length, when he had paused for breath. “For one unskilled in arms to tempt fate on the field of honor is a blunder. Though you have failed to refer to this aspect of the matter, I——”

“Twas not in my mind,” said he, sharply.

“But well it might be,” said I, “and surely it will be, if ever you look into another’s eyes with only two swords between the pair of you. Profit by my experience, I beg you, sir. A challenge is no bagatelle, either in the sending or receiving, though you may think so until you’re on the ground. But then——”

“Silence, boy!” he cried, gruffly. “Such language to me is indecent. Were it not that I believe you more fool than knave, I’d part with you instanter, and let you go your own gait to perdition.”

“Sir,” said I, most respectfully, “you may call me fool or knave, as you please; it is your privilege. But, in speaking as I did, I merely wished to remind you that, while age, as a rule, brings wisdom, there is no fool like an old fool. Does a graybeard always shun sun-kissed curls? Does a gouty foot always flee from a neat ankle? Boy I may be, but, I warn you, even age has dangers. Sir, I have seen life.” And this I said with a great air.

He jumped up as if he had been struck. For an instant I expected him to strike back; for his face was dark with passion. But second thought was more pacific, and he began to pace the room, grumbling and mumbling to himself as he strode up and down the floor. I observed that he limped slightly: perhaps a random shot had wounded deeply. After a little he halted before my chair.

“Before the law you are an offender, yea, a criminal,” he said. “Moreover, the duellist is in deserved disfavor in high quarters. But, for reasons which it is not necessary for you to know, it is possible for

you to avoid arrest. If you will pledge me to leave London and not to stir for thirty days from the asylum I provide, I can promise you a chance to escape your just deserts."

"Anything for harmony and concord," said I. "You have my pledge."

Thus it was that I became acquainted with the walled garden and the house in front of it, a small property near a hamlet some forty miles from the city.

The afternoon of the twenty-eighth day of my term of expiation was waning. Dame Martha, a tall, gaunt woman who had addressed me hardly a half-dozen times since my arrival, was in her room, the windows of which opened upon the garden. The servant, a raw-boned, stupid country girl, was busy with a huge kettle in which something was boiling over a wood fire, the building of which in the corner of the enclosure farthest from me had offered some amusement a half-hour earlier. The watch-dog, a big and surly mongrel, lay asleep in his kennel, a few paces from the house. Between the heat, and the monotony of the surroundings, and the idle planning, of which mention has been made, I was dulled in senses, and so was unaware that a stranger had come upon the scene, until a voice sounded almost at my elbow. Then, looking up, I beheld a boy, who stood, cap in hand and hand on hip, smiling with childish friendliness at the little joke he had played in stealing upon me unperceived.

"Well, my young friend," said I, "what might you be here for?"

"I don't know, sir," he answered, the smile fading from his face.

"That's bad," said I; "but what's the sentence?"

He looked puzzled, and made no reply.

"When did you come?"

He found tongue to say, "To-day."

"Who brought you?"

"He did."

"And who is he?"

"I don't know, sir."

"That's still worse. What is your name?"

"Charles Edward Henry Pierson," said he, contriving to chant his answer in a school-boy sing-song.

"Enough, and to spare," said I. "Four names to one boy: the allowance is excessive."

"That's my last name, sir," he went on, plainly misunderstanding the feeble jest, and perhaps fearing that in some way he had fallen into my bad graces.

"Your last?" I repeated. "Why, lad, if you've still others, they've sparred you out of all sense, as the sailors would put it. To keep the talk going, resume the list, I pray you. Or, to speak more clearly, tell me all your names."

"Charles Edward—Edward—I forget the rest." He wrinkled his little brow in the effort at recollection.

"Henry?" I suggested.

He shook his head.

"But you said 'Henry' a moment ago, being then in the midst of the catalogue. And after 'Henry' came 'Pierson.'"

"Yes, sir, yes," said he, a little impatiently; "but a long time ago they called me something else,—when I was a little boy, sir."

"You're not too big now," said I.

"I'm ten," said he, proudly enough, I assure you.

"I'd have guessed you two years younger; though, being yet a bachelor, I'm not skilled in such matters," said I. "Where do you live, Charles Edward?"

"Nowhere," said he, very confidently and cheerily.

"Eh? Nowhere? That's strange, my boy."

"Where do you live, sir?" he asked, thinking, no doubt, that one hard question deserves another.

"I? Oh, I live—why, Charles, to tell the truth, I'm like your small self: I live nowhere," said I. "It may be you can tell me where your father is."

"My father? I don't remember him," he answered, so quietly that one could not but understand that the word had little meaning to his ears.

"And your mother?"

Again he shook his head, thereby a good deal puzzling me, for out of all his talk of first and last names and the like I had conjectured that fate had given him a step-father whose patronymic had been bestowed upon the child in place of his own. But a mother was an indispensable link in the chain leading to a step-father. Yet somebody must have cared for him: so I said,—

"You've an uncle, perhaps; or an aunt?"

"Oh! Aunt Lucia," said he, his face lighting up at thought of her.

"Where may she be?"

"I—I—don't know, sir," he faltered, and his lips quivered.

"Don't cry, Charlie," said I, hastily. "Be a man. Ask me about myself, if you like. Or no, my boy," I added, a new thought occurring to me: "such gossip is poor, thin conversation at the best. We'll dismiss personal things for the present; that is, after I have reciprocated your courtesy. Let me introduce to you your most obedient servant Mr. John Slayde, lately of Boston, in the State of Massachusetts, but now a gentleman at large."

With that I rose from the bench and made him a deep bow, to which he responded in kind. And then the two of us stood looking at each other, each with a grin on his face, and the elder, at least, with an inward wonder as to what he should say next.

II.

After a space I resumed my seat, and the boy, climbing up beside me, began to seek amusement by prying at some of the loosened pieces of the bench. As has been remarked, he did not look the years to which he laid claim. As for the rest, he was a chubby, well-rounded

urchin, fair-skinned, brown-haired and brown-eyed, who appeared to have been well cared for and fed. His dress was that of a child of persons in good circumstances, being neither poor nor foolishly expensive. Why he should have been brought to Dame Martha's house was a pretty question, and one likely to afford an idle man much refreshing speculation ; for it was hardly on the cards that the taciturn mistress of the place could be cajoled into revealing anything of his antecedents or prospects. So slight was the chance that she would gratify curiosity that, though to cross the garden and call to her in her room would have been a trifling task, I thought the trouble not worth the taking.

Presently the boy, tiring of the bench, slipped down to the ground and peered about the tree. Resting against the trunk was the sword, the luckless weapon which had had a share in immuring me in the country, and which I had brought from the scene of battle and now had with me to serve as a reminder of my misfortunes. The youngster grasped the weapon with glee, and brought it to me.

"Is it yours, sir?" he asked, with shining eyes.

"Why, yes, in a manner," I answered, "though I am not unduly proud of its possession. Have a care, Charlie"—he was drawing the blade from the scabbard,—"have a care. A sword is like a woman, an admirably finished and tempered product, but perilously sharp upon occasion. I doubt if ever a man be safe in declaring himself absolute master of either. Mind you that, my lad." For it has always been my custom to drop useful hints to the young who chance to be in my company.

"Ah!" he cried, grasping the hilt and fiercely thrusting the point toward the tree, "come on! come on! Oh, you coward!" And he stamped his foot upon the turf, as if to encourage his imaginary adversary.

"The tree's a safe opponent," said I. "Have at it, if you will, my son. Oh, the sword, the sword! Once a source of power, now but its emblem; once the weapon of heroes, now the plaything of babes!"

This I declaimed (as I frequently give vent to my soul, using either my own words or another's, according to which occur to me at the time) more for my own benefit than his. Yet, taking the observation to himself, he stopped his play.

"I'm not a babe," he cried, and pouted like Cupid in a pet.

"Certainly not," said I. "My reference was not to you, but to one Hawes, who is, I understand, an ensign in a regiment of His Majesty's, and hence likely to have power over real men who know the smell of gunpowder. Bah! The cruel injustice of the world!"

"I don't know him, sir," said the boy, looking at me with wonder-widened eyes.

"Of course you don't," I rejoined. "Don't fret about him or the like of him."

Thus reassured, the little fellow went about his mimic business, straying little by little nearer the fire and the kettle at which the servant was at work. When he approached too closely, she warned him

off with so shrill a squalling that the dog, roused to activity by the noise, dragged himself from the kennel, and advanced, growling fiercely, toward the intruder.

"Run, Charlie, run! This way, quick!" I called, for the brute was vicious enough to do the child serious harm. But my young friend stood his ground. I leaped up and ran to his assistance, but before half the distance had been covered the dog made his spring. Then I saw the sword gleam, and the mongrel, howling with pain, turn tail and bolt with a long red streak on his side, where the hide had been ripped open from his shoulder almost to his hip.

"Bravo!" I shouted as I reached the champion. "A noble stroke, my boy! He'll trouble you no more. See him run!"

And, indeed, the dog seemed to be crazed by the smart of his wound; for he was dashing about the garden like a mad thing, snapping wildly at the wall. Twice he passed us like an arrow from a bow. The third time he came so close that I seized the sword, intending to finish the work Charlie had begun, but the brute dodged with a wide bound that carried him fairly against the wench, who had been watching the scene in open-mouthed amazement. Down she went in a heap, throwing up her arms as she fell. Now, as it happened, she had been stirring the fire with a wooden poker, the end of which, left in the blaze while she gazed at the dog's antics, had become ignited. This burning brand, impelled by the quick motion with which she sought to save herself, slipped from her hand, and, describing a fine arc, dropped, sputtering sparks like a fuse, upon the thatched roof of a shed in the lee of the house. The thatch was as tinder. Instantly the shed was ablaze. Then the low-hanging eaves of the dwelling caught the flames, and in a moment tongues of fire were flashing along the slope of the roof like columns charging a fortress.

"Fire! fire!" cried the boy, half in terror, half in delight at the show going on before us.

"Yes, Charlie," said I, "you are not deceived: the house is on fire. It behooves us to consider a plan of action. You are, I take it, under no obligations to the owner; therefore you may first devote yourself to removing any personal effects which may be in the place. That is the course I shall follow. Let us enter together, since it may be I can assist you."

"But the others?" he began.

"They are in no immediate danger," I interposed. "The servant has picked herself up and run through the house. Unless my hearing is at fault, she is now calling from the front windows to the neighbors, who will come, no doubt, but will be of no service. As for the mistress, she is neither deaf nor blind. Even the dog has vanished. Come, show me where your luggage is."

He hurried into the house, up the stairs to the second floor, and into a little room back of the one I had occupied for nearly a month. On the bed lay a small leather trunk, which could be carried under one arm with ease. In my own quarters it took little time to thrust my few possessions into a bag. Then, loaded with bag and trunk, and with the boy at my heels, I walked down the stairs and out into the

roadway. A score of rustics had collected in front of the house, and others were coming as fast as their legs could bring them. A few men had buckets and pails, but were making no great effort to use them. Dame Martha was directing the labors of three or four fellows who were removing furniture from the house. Under a tree near by, the servant seemed to have fallen in a fit of hysterics. There was nothing for us to do but to seek a comfortable seat and await results.

The house burned nobly. Soon the roof fell with a crash. The walls, being of stone and stoutly built, stood apparently not much the worse so far, though I judged it quite possible that the heat in a little while would warp one or more of them.

"Well, Charlie, 'tis an excellent fire," said I, glancing down at the boy, who nestled by my side.

"But the woman! She'll be killed, sir!" he exclaimed.

At that I looked up again, puzzled as to his meaning, for, to the best of my knowledge, nobody was in peril. The next instant I was on my feet. The window of the room which had been mine was open, and Dame Martha was crawling through it to the wide stone ledge. Some foolish freak had led her back into the house,—I had not seen her enter,—and the falling of the roof had blocked the hall and cut off her hope of escape by the stairs. She had been cool enough at first, but when there was no need to encounter danger, back she must rush into it. Such is the perversity of woman! This example of the inconsistency of the sex I would have pointed out to the boy, whose youthful mind was open to learn such lessons, but leisure for moral instruction seemed to be lacking. Therefore, bidding him bide where he was, I ran toward the house, calling out to the rustics to fetch a ladder without delay, and to Dame Martha to cling to her perch until succor might reach her. Behind her the room was on fire, and, while no flames yet showed through the window, about her whirled volumes of smoke which intermittently hid from view her gray head and the dark heap of her body huddled upon the ledge. The risk of suffocation was her greatest immediate danger, but I reckoned it less than the peril which was to be found in a leap to the ground; for she was at least twelve feet above the hard flagging laid before the house, and, moreover, had attained the age at which the bones break like pipe-stems.

So I ran, as I say, shouting for a ladder, and perceiving with relief that one was being brought from a cottage not far away. But, though the men who bore it advanced briskly, they were too late. Perhaps the smoke crazed the woman, perhaps flames, invisible to us below, drove her from her place; at any rate, up she sprang with a piercing cry, and for a second stood swaying upon the stone. Then she fell, pitching forward. Her head struck the flagging, and the skull was broken with a crushing sound, which never have I quite succeeded in forgetting. She gasped twice or thrice, but the end came before we could raise her from the ground.

From the people who had gathered near the burning dwelling I endeavored to glean who she was or what friends she had, but they could tell me little. Neighbor she had been to them, but not neigh-

borly, a reticent, home-keeping body who had rarely ventured from her own domain. The servant, questioned in the intervals between hysterics, from one fit of which to another she passed with wonderful persistence, proved to know no more than the rest. All that she could say of the boy was that a stranger had delivered him to Dame Martha that morning and had gone his way without tarrying for rest or refreshment. I despatched a messenger to the rector of the parish, who might be counted upon to have a clearer brain in such emergencies than any of his flock, and then went back to the lad, who had remained obediently where I had left him.

"Well, Charlie," said I, "this has been a day of incident. I trust you have noted all that has taken place. Observation in youth is wisdom in manhood. But, to pass to matters of present moment, circumstances have made us free-lances. Such being the case, you and I must deliberate upon the situation. To begin with, let us go to the village inn, where we may spend the night, and whence in the morning we may set out for London. Perchance we may find friends of yours in the big city. At all events, we need not linger here. You are under no bond; and as for me, why, surely I can regard as cancelled the little remnant of my sentence which is unserved, especially as no man of reason could desire me to confine myself to a smoking ruin."

This scheme the boy and I followed to the letter. The next morning, after a meeting with the rector, who, as it proved, was no better acquainted than I with Dame Martha, and who further told me that no papers had been found in the house,—which was not to be wondered at, the rooms having been gutted by the fire,—we undertook our journey to the metropolis. Our luggage had been forwarded by carter to the village, where we were to take the coach to London; and, the day being fine and the distance moderate, we two strolled off very cheerfully. More than one maid to whom I gave "good-morning" turned to look after us, as well she might; for, 'pon my word, we were rare birds to be flitting along country lanes. Which serves as a reminder that not yet have I explained the sort of man I then was. Therefore let it now be set forth that I was slender rather than thick-set, two inches less than six feet in height, and so built about the shoulders as to appear somewhat lighter and less muscular than I was in fact. As for other details, I was moderately agile, could boast a well-turned leg, and having been left-handed as a boy—a matter which gave my carping relatives much anxiety—was what is sometimes termed ambidextrous, though I hold the word to be misleading, inasmuch as no man, to my knowledge, ever acquired exactly the same skill with both hands. My glass tells me that my eye is gray, whence I infer that such was its color early in the century. My enemies allege that my nose is hooked and my hair red. There may be some slight truth in the first charge, but of the second I say this: the hue assigned to my locks can be noted only in certain unpropitious lights. In dress I have always followed one of two plans: either to strut with the proudest in the brightest plumage of the latest mode, or else to seek comfort alone in garments made for the use of the wearer and not to dazzle the eyes of the beholder. On that morning I might have posed

as a figure from the London fashion-plates, for, while I had taken but one suit with me to my place of penance, it was the freshest and the best in my possession.

But now from matters of appearance to matters of occurrence. We took the coach in due time, and late in the afternoon were safely brought to the heart of the city. A porter carried our effects to a quiet inn with which I had acquaintance, Charlie and I walking a few paces behind the man. Suddenly the boy's grip on my hand tightened.

"Oh, sir," he cried, "we've left it behind!"

"Left what?" said I, a little shortly, for his speech had interrupted my contemplation of a very comely damsel at a window over the way.

"The sword," said he. "It must be in the garden, where you dropped it when the fire blazed up."

"True for you," said I: "we'll never see it more. But, between us, Charlie, I shall not weep. Both for you and me that blade produced results out of all calculation. Let sleeping dogs lie, they say; and so, after seeing a dog waked and a sword plied, say I: let lost swords rust. Step up, my son: our journey's almost ended."

III.

I had chosen a quiet hostelry, because of doubts whether 'twould yet be discreet to put myself much in evidence. How far the duel might have blown over, I did not know. Another thing commanding the inn selected was that it lay within ten minutes' walk of Mr. Best's house, whither I prepared to take myself without delay. News is seldom improved by keeping, and mine was news of importance to the merchant. It promised to disturb him, but that likelihood did not check me; for his manner to me had not been of the kind to develop affection.

Most men in my position would have carried the boy to Mr. Best's; for the chances were at least even that the old man had had to do with Charlie's appearance in my retreat. But for this very reason I left the child behind. In life, as well as in play, it is well to vary sometimes from the move which seems most natural, especially when one has no partner nor ally to be confused thereby. If Best knew nothing of the boy, no harm would be done: were he responsible for his safety, my advantage would be evident. Reassured by this reflection, I entered the factor's house, prepared to deal with the owner as events might guide me.

Late as the hour was,—the clock had gone five,—a servant showed me without demur to the room in which her employer gave audience to visitors. The place was strangely still, and the air seemed dead and heavy. So much had I observed, when the door opened, and in came a clerk, one Hopkins, whom I knew to be Best's confidential man,—a tall, gangling fellow, who twice or thrice had roused my ire by his lack of deference.

"I asked for your master," said I, sharply, and guessing that he little liked the title as applied to his employer. "Is he from home?"

"He is here," the man answered, so quietly that I feared my shot had missed. "You cannot see him, however. He is very ill, it may be dying. He has had a stroke."

"And not the first?" said I, questioningly.

"No."

"When was he stricken?"

"Two days ago: he has not spoken since."

"The doctors have bled him, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes!" he cried, impatiently: "he has the best of care, but he fails to rally."

"Well, I've tidings for him," said I. "Shall I bear them away with me, or will you receive them?"

"So far as may be, I act for him," he replied.

"In a word," I went on, "the house to which I was sent burned yesterday. Its tenant jumped from an upper window and was killed."

"What?" he cried. "She dead? Her home destroyed?"

"Correct in both suppositions," said I, dryly, though cheered inwardly by the excitement he displayed.

"She sent no message?"

"Her fall killed her almost instantly." And I proceeded to tell him what had occurred, making no mention, however, of the boy. Hopkins heard me through, his lips twitching and his forehead furrowed. For a mere hireling, he seemed to feel a very acute interest in the tale. Once or twice he appeared to be about to put a question, but in each case checked himself.

"Now you've got that story," said I, "and there's another affair to discuss. My probation, or whatever you may style it, is cancelled as to the remaining day of the thirty to which I pledged myself. I so regard it, and notice to that effect I hereby serve upon you, as the agent and representative of Elijah Best, invalidated. Do you, in his name, accept such service?"

"Yes, yes," said he, absently, as if the matter were of no moment.

"Then I am at liberty to go where I list," said I. "Now for ways and means. What balance stands in my favor on your books?"

He opened a ledger on a desk set against the wall, and ran his eye down one of the pages.

"Two hundred pounds, ten shillings, thrippence," said he.

"Never mind the odd shillings and pennies," said I: "give me the pounds. Two hundred of them,—a thousand dollars, more or less, —not much of a capital."

"But it is all you can count upon receiving," said he, in a tone which vexed me. "Your agent in Boston, Mr. Richard Warbeck, has sent word that your funds are exhausted."

"Indeed?" said I, calmly, for I would not betray regret before this clerk. "Well, every spring runs dry sooner or later."

"Here is his letter," said Hopkins, taking a sheet of paper from a drawer. I glanced over the page, and tossed it back upon the desk.

"He says he can forward no more money," said I. "Very well:

that's all there is to the matter. He is an honorable man. Kindly give me the two hundred pounds."

He went into an inner room, returning in a few minutes with the money.

"Keep the shillings and pennies," said I, thrusting the notes into a safe pocket.

"Take the money: it is yours," said he.

"Then 'tis mine to give," said I, and dropped the coins upon the desk, where he let them lie untouched,—at least, so long as I was present. Having signed a receipt, I started toward the door.

"By the way," I remarked, pausing when my hand was on the knob, "I've a young friend who came up to town with me. He——"

I got no farther. Hopkins, whose back had been turned to me, dropped the receipt, and wheeled so swiftly that he almost lost his balance. His face went pale, his jaw dropped, his whole aspect evidenced overwhelming perturbation.

"What's amiss?" I demanded.

He mumbled something, of which I could make out little except that, inasmuch as I had said nothing of Charlie in describing the fire, he had hoped that the boy had been delayed and had not reached the house. This was enough, however, to show that I had come to the right shop to dispose of my news.

"I'll bid you good-day," said I, opening the door an inch or two. The feint succeeded.

"Stay, sir," he cried, eagerly, and, running up, would have caught me by the sleeve, had I not shaken off his hand with scant ceremony.

"Well, what do you want?" I asked, pretending to dust the cloth his fingers had touched, a piece of business I copied from the theatre.

"Tell me, sir: is he unharmed?"

"Absolutely," said I, "and keeping choice company."

"Is he here—in London?"

"That I've told you," said I, regretting that I had let slip so much.

"What madness possessed you to bring him here?"

"Madness?" said I, sharply. "Heed your words, my friend. Did you mean madness, as well as say it?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, I beg your pardon," said he, humbly enough. "My employer's illness has shaken me. I meant no disrespect, I assure you, sir."

"Very well, then," said I, with great magnanimity: "what is all this to-do about?"

At that he fell to speaking volubly enough, but with precious little sense in all his discourse, out of which it was impossible to gain either premises or conclusion. I put a question now and then, but his replies left the confusion worse confounded. Then, in turn, he did his best to lure me into some definite admission. I saw that I had underestimated the fellow's brains, and that under a guise of unreasoning terror he was seeking to trap me. Yet the fright was not wholly assumed; his first display of it had been genuine; from which I inferred that there was about the boy a mystery not to be dispelled

without serious inconvenience to the clan of Best. At last, perceiving that for the present nothing more was to be gained from this combat with mercantile craft, I drew myself up stiffly, and looked the clerk full in the eye.

"My friend," said I, severely, "I'll have no more of this. As it is, I've listened too long to this gossip about your master's affairs. It shames one to have been led into seeming encouragement of your betrayal of your trust. I warn you to check your tongue; and I take great pleasure in bidding you good-day."

He was beside me again before I had opened the door. In truth, his movement met my calculations.

"One moment, sir," he pleaded. "Before you go, tell me, I beg you, how we may communicate with you. A letter, a messenger—"

"Why either?" I asked, carelessly.

"Because,—in case—" He broke off, and gazed at me appealingly.

"Well, in case of what?" said I, impatiently. "Speak out, man; I've no more time to waste."

"Of pressing danger," he faltered.

"Of the law?"

He nodded assent.

"Speak out," I repeated, knowing that the chase was growing hot. Stubborn as he was, I think he would have made a virtue of necessity, had not an interruption come from without. There was the rumble of a carriage in the street before the house, ceasing as the vehicle halted at the entrance. Hopkins ran to the window and peered out. Then he sprang back, more than ever a victim to his fears, and, catching me by the arm, tried to lead me toward the door opening into the rear room. But I broke from his grasp with no great trouble. When men tremble at the general thing we call law, nine times in ten they dread some particular man. Now it might well be that the man in this case was about to enter the house, in which event the clerk would desire to prevent my encountering him. As an honest investigator, I could not afford to humor the fellow. So, without further parley, I strode out upon the landing.

"Come back! Come back!" cried Hopkins, as loudly as he dared. "You'll ruin us all. Quick! Come back, if you've pity in your soul!"

But, had I been willing to retreat, the opportunity was gone. The visitor—a stranger to me—was climbing the stairs. A fine man he was, too, taller than I, broad-shouldered, rich of dress and haughty of countenance. I did not like his face, but none the less I impressed it upon my mind. The next task was to make him speak, and it promised to be easily accomplished.

He was coming toward me, usurping the lion's share of the space between the banister and wall, and affecting a noble ignorance of my existence which gave me a thrill of delight. There is no finer sport than to tread upon the corns of your square-jawed man: first, because it is a duty to humble pride, and second, because of all men he least likes such attentions. We met midway between top and bottom. He

did not yield an inch ; nor did I. His foot found the disputed step ; my foot found his. He gave a cry of pain, and, as he shrank instinctively toward the rail, I passed him, triumphantly holding the crown of the way, so to speak.

" You clumsy whelp ! " he roared, with an oath. " What do you mean by such insolence to your betters ? You scoundrel ! I'll kick you into the street, and break every bone in your body ! "

" Sir, did you speak ? " said I, wheeling on the lowest step. " Did you address me, sir ? "

" You and no other, " he cried, in hot rage. " Who are you ? My foot's broken ! I'll have your blood, you ruffian ! "

" Ah ! an error somewhere, " said I, calmly. " I'm none of those choice characters you mention so glibly. Send for a surgeon, if you're injured, and tickle yourself into a better temper. I wish you good-day, sir. "

And thereupon, deeming the discussion neatly ended, I walked out of the house, leaving him to curse himself out of breath if he found relief in the process. I did not expect him to attempt to follow me, and in this I was not mistaken. When I looked back, he was nowhere in sight.

" Poor Hopkins will have a busy afternoon, " I reflected. " Well, let 'em fight it out ; 'tis no affair of mine. I doubt, though, whether my limping friend will get much information for his trouble. "

It chanced that in leaving Mr. Best's house I had not moved in the direction of my inn, a circumstance which led me soon to turn into another street. From the corner I glanced back along the way I had come, and, in doing so, noted a boy dodge into an open shop-door. It seemed to me that he was very like a youth in Mr. Best's employ. Wherefore, after a little, I turned another corner, and halted. In a moment or two quick footsteps sounded near at hand, and the boy came running almost into my arms.

" My child, " said I, grasping his collar and shaking him so briskly that his hat fell from his head and his teeth rattled a merry tune, " your taste in promenades is vitiated. Your health is endangered : curiosity slays more victims than the plague. I'm doctor enough to prescribe for you. Go back, my son, go back to those who sent you ; and remember that when in your walks abroad you happen to find your route that of some quiet gentleman, 'twill be wise to turn aside. Thus is longevity promoted. Now"—here I spurred his energies with my toe—" run as if the devil was after you,—as he will be if you linger. "

Devil or man would have been put to his best to overhaul that spy ; and I resumed my course with a tranquil spirit. The occurrence, though, deserved consideration. Hopkins was, of course, doing what he could to discover Charlie's whereabouts. Equally it might be assumed that he desired to keep the child out of the hands of some other person, very likely the irascible visitor I had met on the stairs. Why should such a rivalry exist for the possession of the boy ? To answer that query would be to solve the whole problem.

" If Hopkins had spoken out manfully, " I soliloquized, " 'twould

have been better for him. But, after all, I'm not sorry he chose the other course. I don't fancy him. As for the blustering chap—well, I've no cause to do him a good turn. By heaven, I'll add another knot to this tangle. I'll take Charlie out of London, and while the money lasts he and I will live like fighting-cocks on the fat of the land. And when the cash is gone, why, we'll stir up one or t'other of these gentlemen, if nothing more amusing offers."

I had no very definite, far-sighted plan, but there was something about this project, formed on an impulse, which caught my notion. No sooner had I reached the inn than I took the boy to a corner, where we might talk undisturbed and unheard by others.

"Charlie," I began, gravely, "would you like to go away with me? Or, tell me first if you think of anybody with whom you'd rather be."

"Aunt Lucia is very nice," said he, after a moment's hesitation.

"And where might we find her?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Did you ever live with her?"

"Oh, yes, long ago."

"Was that in London?"

"No, no: far away—millions and millions of miles over the ocean."

"The deuce!" said I. "Not in America?"

"Yes, sir; in America, near a pretty river."

"What was the name of the town?"

"There wasn't any town; just our house, sir."

"Was your aunt's name Pierson?" I asked.

"No, sir: just Aunt Lucia."

"Well," said I, after a moment's thought, "somebody put you on a big ship, and you finally came to England. Wasn't that the way of it?"

He nodded.

"How long ago?"

"One—two—three—four," he counted off the numbers on his fingers,—"four years ago, sir."

"And then where did you go?"

"To a farm among some hills. The farmer's name was Pierson, sir, and he was an old man."

"You stayed on the farm till somebody—a strange man, let us say—came, and took you to the house where you and I were, the house that burned: isn't that so?"

Again he nodded.

"Humph!" said I; "when one nest was in danger of discovery the bird was moved to another. Now, think hard, Charlie: did you ever hear of Mr. Best, or Mr. Hopkins?"

"No, sir," said he, promptly.

"Of course you didn't," said I. "They were too clever to let out such details, I'll warrant you. Old Pierson was played as the real protector, even to the extent of lending his name. Now, boy, one more point: did you ever know a great big man, with sharp eyes, and a loud voice, who bullied everybody about him?"

This time he shook his head in emphatic negative.

"Well, then, to come down to the present," said I. "Would you like to go away with me, Charlie?"

"Yes, sir," said he, a little shyly, but looking well pleased nevertheless. "Shall we have another sword?"

"Certainly we shall," said I, "or, better still, you shall have one of your own." At this he clapped his hands. "Now, listen to me carefully. To avoid the chance of dispute in the matter, I think I'd best adopt you, Charlie, say as my nephew. If you are agreed to this, repeat after me what I am about to pronounce: I, Charles, accept you, Jack—or stay, make it John; we'll leave no opening for quibbles."

"I, Charles, accept you, John," he repeated.

"As uncle," said I.

"As uncle," said he.

"To have and to hold"—the phrase was from memory, though at the moment I was unconscious of the source.

"To have and to hold," he echoed.

"Till—till—er—circumstances do us part."

"Till circumstances do us part," said he, as grave as a bishop.

"And I, John, do accept you, Charles, as nephew on the conditions aforesaid," said I. "And next, neph'y, we'll take a new name with our fresh start in life. Slayde and Pierson may leave too many clues, if certain persons make wide search. Let us consider—ah! I have it, Charlie—the very thing for us: Holmes. In sound, at least, 'tis very like the possession you and I are without. Yes, Holmes it shall be and is. You are Charlie Holmes; don't let it slip from your mind. And I am Mr. John Holmes, the uncle of his nephew."

IV.

The boy and I had left London far behind us before morning broke. A few trifling precautions taken at the inn (of which a loud demand upon the waiter in the coffee-room for the announcement bill of night coaches to the north may serve as an example), a change of luggage-bearers soon after quitting the hostelry, and a moderate amount of doubling about the streets before taking a post-chaise for the south, were little details such as would occur to any man of sense. For, so nearly as I could determine the situation, no harm could ensue from laying a false trail. From Hopkins's haste in putting a spy to dog my steps 'twas to be expected that, his minion being detected and returned to him in disgrace, he would make further search for my quarters, though I reckoned that the inquiry would be pursued less energetically and systematically than would have been the case had Elijah Best been in condition to have a guiding hand in it. But Best, in all probability, would never cause me more annoyance. These matters I considered deeply, both before we set forth upon our pilgrimage and afterward as we sped along the smooth high-road. Could I have gained some little knowledge of the sort of meeting held by the clerk and the blustering

gentleman, I should have been clearer in mind as to the soundness of my course; but, with such information lacking, I had to be content with theory and speculation.

"Well," said I softly to myself, looking down at the lad, who, cuddling against me, had fallen asleep, "well, Charlie, hare and hounds is a fine old game, to be played for the sport of it, if for nothing else. All Britain's before us: let the hounds run themselves till they drop; the odds are on the hare."

At daybreak rain began to fall, and, as the going was spoiled thereby, we left the chaise and betook us to an inn. Thence, on the following morning, the weather having brightened, we departed afoot, beginning a holiday ramble which for three weeks gave us rare amusement. By easy stages not beyond the boy's strength, we travelled on, coming at last to a pretty village, so trim and neat in its cottages and so comfortable in its inn that very gladly we paused there, first to refit and afterward from liking for the place and its people. Indeed, such were its simple charms that at last I determined to winter within its borders.

Now, of our stay in Starrow, as the village was called, I propose to say little; for, wholesome and blameless as it was, and good to recall as it is, 'twas barren of events of which others, who can feel no personal kindness for myself or for the boy, might wish to read. Yet of my own inclination I would dwell at length upon this period, not only for memory's sake, but also for the reason that it should serve to set at rest the calumnies with which I have been assailed at times by enemies who would deny me even the poor virtue of an attachment to a home,—which any dog may have without exciting comment for his merit. The truth is, I am by inclination a domestic body—in reason, as all things should be. But this is straying from the plain path of my narrative.

Among the people, gentle and simple, both the boy and I made friends. Of the classes were the vicar, the Rev. Nathaniel Fielding, and his wife; Squire Huntington, an elderly bachelor of ancient lineage and cramped estate; and a fine old Frenchman, known to the countryside as "The Count." Though supposedly of noble family and one of the aristocrats who fled their country in the days of the Revolution, he still tarried in exile, though Napoleon had fallen a year before the time of which I am now speaking. Why he remained in England is beyond my knowledge. I made no efforts to probe his secret. Every gentleman is entitled to his mystery, if he so desires. Note this: I say gentleman. Of the masses were many for whom I cherished much regard, but have no space to mention by name. I was much at the parson's house, and often at the squire's, where many a long evening grew short with cards; for the vicar loved his whist, and would even join in a round game on occasion. But, if my reception was hospitable, these good people took Charlie straight to their hearts, with which I was well pleased, though, indeed, the youngster had the art of winning affection to a most unaccountable degree. So, when one day his reverence approached me with a proposal, pleading that he feared his classics were growing sadly rusty, I told him, freely enough, that he was at liberty to teach the boy all that he himself knew.

"I've no objection," said I, "so long as the lad is willing; but

this I do insist upon, from the lesson of my own experience: if he wearies of his books, then his lessons end instanter. 'Tis a fine, right-minded child, whom I should grieve to see warped in disposition or soured in temper."

Accordingly, upon this understanding, Charlie resumed his schooling, or began it—I hardly know which, for, though he could pick out the letters of the alphabet with unfailing discrimination, and often would spell through a simple sentence with considerable success, it had not occurred to me to ascertain whether his skill was intuitive or acquired. The vicar declared him a born student,—a statement for which I do not vouch,—and told me many things of his progress, which I dare say were substantially correct. Then, too, the count must have a finger in the pie, offering to train the boy in the use of the sword, an opportunity I accepted for myself as well; for, though the heyday of that weapon was past, as any one could see, the scar upon my cheek was evidence that the accomplishment might be worth the having. I cannot say, however, that I profited greatly by the instruction. Indeed, 'tis not clear that in such matters real skill can be acquired by a pupil out of his boyhood. For the lad, though, the count was full of praise, which, so far as I could determine, was deserved.

Thus the winter passed, and spring came and went; and with the heat of the summer a long-meditated project took definite shape. Up to London I posted, and sought the house in which Mr. Best had lived. 'Twas no surprise to find another's name upon the door-plate. The new tenants were courteous, but not well informed. Best had died of his stroke; Hopkins had dropped out of sight, betaking himself nobody knew whither. Leaving the place, I walked along, hardly noting the direction, until, turning a corner, I recognized the spot upon which the spy had fallen into my clutches. I paused to shake my sides at the recollection of his flight. How he had run! Again and again I roared at the scene memory painted, resuming my stroll at last with eyes so swimming in tears that the people in the street grew dim and difficult to distinguish. Once I thought I saw a form dive into a court, as if in haste to avoid observation, but so clouded was my vision that I set the matter down as some trick of the water welling up under my lids. Presently I reached the quiet inn of which mention has been made. There the night was spent, and in the morning I took coach for the south.

Less than a week after my return to the country I made a discovery. Moderate as were the charges in the village for food and shelter, my money was almost gone. Something of the sort had been anticipated. Luckily, I was not in debt, but when my assets were counted less than five pounds was in the purse. When some trifling presents should have been made to the humble folk about, the residue would be hardly deserving of mention. If we were to save our reputation, we must quit our friends at once.

"Charlie," said I, having called him from his playground near the inn, "you and I'll be better for a change of air. How would you like to venture out with me? We'll go here and there and everywhere, see cities and towns, and ships, and all the rest."

"When?" he asked, eagerly.

"Immediately."

"And where, sir, shall we go first?"

"Wherever we choose," said I, not caring to be too definite. "Run along to the squire's and the count's and bid 'em good-by. Then go to the vicar's, and wait for me there."

He darted off on his errand, and I fell to packing some of our clothing in a bag which should not be too heavy to carry on the road. Our other effects I gave to the landlord when settling the reckoning. Then, having distributed my little tokens of good will, I sought the parson's house. There was a party gathered there; for, strange to say, both the squire and the Frenchman had tailed on after Charlie to our rendezvous. Besides, close under Mrs. Fielding's wing were two girls, whom I had never seen before,—a tall, slender, dark-haired miss of sixteen or thereabouts, and a younger maid of nine or ten, with mischievous eyes and dimpled cheeks, who was ogling Master Charles most recklessly. But the children had all the cheeriness to themselves. Upon the elders seemed to have fallen a world of sadness.

"What's this we hear?" the vicar's wife asked, sharply. "Surely you're not going to take Charlie from us?"

"With regret," said I, and at that instant there was something of the feeling possessing me. "Yes, he and I are to resume our travels. 'Tis time he was seeing life."

"Nonsense!" rapped out the lady, still more sharply; "a child like him, indeed! I'm amazed to hear you speak so, Mr. Holmes. What, pray, can such a tender lamb gain by shearing?—which is the sort of treatment that goes, I'll warrant you, with seeing life, as you call it."

"Pardon me, madam," said I, calmly, "but I cannot agree with you."

"Nay, Mary," her husband interposed, "our friend must care for the boy as he thinks best. Come, present the gentleman to the young ladies. Or, if you prefer,—for his spouse sat facing us with uncompromising visage,—let the task be mine. Marian Grant,—or I should say Miss Grant, shouldn't I?—this is Mr. John Holmes; and here is Miss Margaret Grant, whom nobody can call anything but Peggy."

Each girl gave me a courtesy, the elder with much grace, and the younger with an air of regarding the ceremony as a huge joke.

"Your obedient servant, ladies," said I, with a bow. "You have lately arrived, I believe?"

"This morning, sir," said Miss Grant.

"Yes, only this morning," chimed in Miss Peggy; and, upon my word, I believe she winked at me. I might have risked a return of this civility, had not the parson interrupted the budding conversation.

"Is it necessary for you to go at once?" said he, laying a hand upon my arm.

"Yes, at once," said I; for clearly the longer the delay the more difficult would be the parting. "Charlie, make your adieu, while I begin mine. Mrs. Fielding, believe me, I cannot thank you sufficiently

for your many kindnesses to me and to the boy. Mr. Fielding, I can only say the same to you, sir."

And so I went through the list, keeping an eye the while upon Charlie. The squire patted the lad's head, and, mumbling his words very gruffly, thrust a coin into his hand; the count kissed him on both cheeks, and put something where it might keep the squire's tip company; the elderly lady took him into her arms as if he had been her own son. Miss Grant gave him her hand very kindly, but Miss Peggy bussed him fairly upon the lips. And, to Charlie's credit be it said, he paid back the salute with interest.

Just how it was brought about I can hardly tell, but finally he and I were without the house and moving toward the road. Suddenly the parson ran down the steps from the door and hurried along the path.

"Go on, Charlie," said he, as he overtook us. "I have a word to say to your uncle."

"Well, Mr. Fielding?" said I, as the boy obeyed the command.

"Mr. Holmes," said he, very gravely, and yet so sweetly (for I hold that a man's voice may be sweet) that, for the instant, I was smitten with regret for my pseudonyme, "Mr. Holmes, you are a very young man. Will you forgive one who is much older, if he speak plainly? In all sincerity, and in love for the boy and friendship for you, I beg you to reconsider. Have you no doubts of what you are about to do? Do you realize the influences to which you may unwittingly subject this child? He is at an age when character is moulded. Whither, to what, are you leading him? You are a strange man,—pardon me for my bluntness,—and I do not understand you. But, John Holmes, for the boy's sake I fear you."

"Sir, your speech is sharp," said I.

"It may be, but back of it is naught but kindness," he cried, eagerly. "As the boy's uncle, you are his natural and legal protector—"

"Well?" said I, but the one word was hard to utter.

"And therefore to you only can I appeal. Let Charlie bide with us until such time as you choose to return. John Holmes, though you be his kinsman, and I not of his blood—"

I broke in abruptly, for I could stand no more of this:

"Mr. Fielding, the die is cast. Charlie goes with me. But so much I promise you: if I am forced to trust him to another's care it shall be to yours. And now good-by. I can say no more."

"Good-by," he answered, in a choking voice. "Good-by; and may God bless you both, and keep the lad from harm!"

And so, parting from the old man a second time, I strode after the boy. When I had overtaken him we two walked on side by side in silence for many minutes.

"Uncle Jack," said Charlie at last, looking up into my face, "what do you think the count gave me? A ring. See the sparkle."

"Humph!" said I, glancing at the circle of gold in which a stone of price was set. It had been a cherished possession of the count's, and the poor devil had few others.

"Peggy's a nice girl, isn't she, sir?" the lad asked, after another long pause.

"Humph!" I repeated. "Did you ever see her before to-day?"

"No, sir," said he; "but I shall surely see her again. I think I'll marry her, Uncle Jack."

"Humph!" said I once more, and shifted the weight of the bag upon my shoulders for the hill which lay before us. But presently, the somewhat depressing influence of the farewell scene wearing off, and the lad's fancy for the little maiden growing more amusing on reflection, I burst into a chuckle, and then into a laugh.

"Perhaps you've done well to make your pick early in life," said I. "At any rate, 'twill do no harm, and the practice may prove useful later on. They say every Jack should have his Jill,—which must mean one Jill at a time. And honestly, my boy, no truly loving heart will worship more than one at once. At least, such is my impression, though I'm no authority."

"But, uncle," said he, thoughtfully, "where is your Jill?"

"Oh," said I, quickly, "nobody has yet been able to find out."

V.

With a plumper purse the first ten days of our second wanderings afoot would have been delightful, the weather being clear, the country pretty, and the roads easy; and, in spite of our slender resources, we fared not so badly on the whole; for, while we shunned inns, it was to find farm-houses whose doors opened hospitably enough and whose mistresses seemed only too glad to make the boy comfortable. Strange it was, indeed, how little I counted with these good dames, albeit in those days I was no bad figure of a man (and this I say freely and boldly, for mock modesty, being at bottom a lie, I cannot regard as becoming in either man or woman, old or young). But, no matter what answer might be given to my greeting, only one song was sung when the lad was concerned. Out of this state of things, as has been said, came a quite endurable manner of existence for us both. A little meditation, too, had served to end any doubts created by the parson's appeal and the criticism of myself he had seemed to verge upon. In confessing that he failed to understand me he had let the cat out of the bag. 'Twas the old story of my Boston kinsmen told again,—the inability of some good souls to comprehend a simple, straightforward character. If my relations, though, had been as considerate as he, and had not suffered prejudice to overcome courtesy, I might have borne with them; but they needs must err in the common way, as if the bond of family could forever make excuse for bitter words and baseless revilings.

Ten days, as has been related, we journeyed pleasantly, following no prearranged route, but gradually making toward the coast. The eleventh dawned dark and cheerless, with a keen wind blowing. The boy woke very early. He appeared out of sorts, showing little appetite for the delicacies his hostess pressed upon him at breakfast. Some-

thing was amiss with him, but what, I, being no doctor, could not determine. It might be merely some slight indisposition, yet I thought it wise to get into the neighborhood of a town. Portsmouth lay within a score of miles.

"Cheer up, laddie," said I, when we had left the farm-house behind us. "Come; we'll make what the soldiers call a forced march. We're flying light: this bag is like a feather. Let's see how many mile-posts we can pass by noon."

He quickened his pace, but made no answer, nor could I lure him into talk, though again and again I essayed to hearten him. Even mention of Miss Peggy had lost its power to set his tongue going. So, with waxing apprehension, I plodded along, offering him a helping hand when the road was either rough or steep. I had spoken but the truth in telling him that the bag's weight was but a trifle; for, albeit we had parted with few shillings for food and lodging, I had forced upon the good folk who entertained us odds and ends from this same bag, until now its cheeks were collapsed like those of a man in a decline. On we went pretty steadily, though far from merrily, following as well as might be the directions given for a short-cut across country. But, the lanes being many, the sun hidden by clouds, and the people we met few, I was uncertain, when we halted at noon, whether we had not strayed widely from the course. Charlie's condition was alarming. His face was flushed, his pulse quick, and while we sat beneath a tree to rest, his eyes closed as if with weariness; nor would he take food, though he drank eagerly of the water I fetched from a spring near by. To add to our troubles, the clouds were blackening fast, and the rain, threatened all the morning, would soon be upon us. Already a few big drops had splashed on the road when we set out again. I seized the boy's hand and hurried him along. There was no house in sight.

We had gone maybe a quarter of a mile, when Charlie's strength gave out, and he would have fallen had not I supported him. The rain, too, was increasing fast. From the bag I took a spare coat and wrapped it about him. Then, tossing the nearly emptied bag into a field, with some little difficulty I got the lad upon my back, and, thus burdened, resumed the advance. Sometimes I ran, but more often was forced to keep within a walk; for I dared not make too much haste with no notion of how long a tramp there was before me. About us poured the rain in drenching sheets. On and on I plodded, until my limbs and back ached with fatigue and my eyes were blinded by the drops. At last I halted, lowered Charlie to the ground as gently as the stiffened muscles would allow, cleared my eyes, and peered through the mist and rain. And then, weary as I was, I gave a cry of joy; for before us, at the foot of a long hill upon the top of which we stood, lay a town, and beyond it the Channel, showing a dull gray expanse of waters under the low-sweeping clouds.

Dreary as the prospect might have been to others, to me 'twas the gladdest picture upon which glance had ever rested. While I was hoisting the boy upon my shoulders, a man, bent under the storm, came hurrying along the road.

"Portsmouth?" I cried to him, pointing to the town.

"Nay, nay; the Haven," he answered, and sped past us down the slope.

I staggered after him, running in a poor, weak fashion, for which, however, there was some excuse. And thus at last I reached the town, and, taking the first street, went from house to house, seeking shelter at least for the boy. From one to another I went, repulsed again and again, until at the seventh—a number often held to be of good omen—a woman took us in, for a woman's reason, which was no less than that her son too lay ill. Ay, 'tis a strange world is this of ours: so any world must be with women in it.

Now, of what happened while Charlie fought out his fight with fever I shall say little beyond this: for two weeks his life hung in the balance, and then he passed one night into a deep sleep, from which he awoke after many hours, weak and emaciated to a shadow, as it were, yet with the disease conquered and a brain from which the delirious fancies of his malady had been banished. Another week, and he still lay abed, but so much strengthened that I hoped soon to have him on his feet.

Meanwhile I had contrived to exist, but at the cost of more than could be spared with entire convenience. My watch was with one who judged it worth fifty pounds and hence gave ten; a few knick-knacks were with the timepiece; the coat in which Charlie had been wrapped was worn by another than him for whom 'twas made. But with the boy mending and the doctor paid there was no great cause for woe-mont, though I did not see clearly how the handsome present due the good woman who had received the lad, and who refused all pay, was to be come at. Being supperless, as it chanced, I strolled down to the water's edge one evening, thinking that some idea of value might suggest itself while I loitered peacefully along the beach. Much that is worth having comes from the sea, and sight and sound of it often sharpen a dulled understanding.

The Haven, it should be said, was a sleepy town from which bigger and more hustling neighbors had drawn most of the trade upon which it had once thriven. Its harbor (from which it gained the name applied in the local speech) was deemed shallow for deep-sea ships, although one lay at anchor off the place. This craft had been in the bay for many days, and was likely to remain there for some time to come, being in government charge, both because of an accusation of certain dealings with smugglers, and also because of the fact of having a plague aboard. She was a clumsy lump of a vessel, her plight seeming to be advertised in the disorder of her spars and rigging. I had viewed her often, with a sort of sympathy for her misfortunes. On this evening I sat me down upon a spile of an old wooden pier from which she was in plain view. The pier was somewhat remote from the usual landing-place, and, as a rule, was a fine spot for undisturbed reflections. But after a little a man approached, and, paying me no heed, began to pace up and down the planking, with his eyes fixed upon the anchored ship. He was a short, fat fellow, with the nervous quickness in his motions which one may note in some men of his build.

From one thing and another which had come to my ears, I guessed him to be the vessel's owner, who had hastened down from London to be near her, but with what good result 'twas difficult to perceive.

The little man trotted to and fro, his gaze never veering from the ship, and his toes, therefore, getting a sharp knock occasionally against the uneven flooring of the pier. Little by little he was nearing a loose beam which lay close to the string-piece, and which to a person taken unawares might be an ugly stumbling-block. Up and down the platform he hurried, getting closer and closer to the obstruction. At last his foot missed it by a hair's-breadth.

"Now for next time," said I to myself. "Ten to one he falls over it—and no takers."

The odds were none too great. His toe struck the timber. An instant later he had stumbled forward over the edge of the pier and fallen into the water with the splash of a playful porpoise.

"If he can swim," thought I, "'twill be pleasanter for him. Halloo, Jack ! this affair may be opportune. Ship-owners have money ; under the shock of danger they may be generous. Arise, my boy, and have a look at him."

Stepping forward, I saw the little man's head bobbing up and down. His arms were moving rapidly, but not as a skilled swimmer would have managed them.

"Help ! help !" he gasped, catching a glimpse of me.

"Certainly, sir," I answered, "all in due time. Be patient. Presently I shall assist you."

He tried to cry out again, but, the water getting into his mouth, his success was indifferent. Seeing an old rope within reach, I picked it up, prepared to toss him an end of it, and then, changing my plan on observing that the other end was fast to a post, held to the rope myself, and sprang overboard. To have hauled him up, as if he had been a bucket in a well, would have been a simple piece of business ; for he was by no means so far gone as to have missed catching and clinging to the line. But also 'twould have been most prosaic. As the matter went, the rescue was accomplished with some slight trouble, the little man's weight being more and his wits less than I had calculated. Yet, in the end, the pair of us were safely upon the pier, puffing, blowing, and sputtering, he from the brine which had leaked into his throat, and I from the expenditure of a good deal of muscular exertion. With his soaked garments clinging to his plump form and little rills running down his legs and arms and nose and hair, and his eyes almost closed, he cut a figure of the sort to stir a mourner to mirth. But, curbing the inclination to merriment, I led him to the nearest cottage, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered to stagger along with the aid of a guiding arm through his.

The cottage was small and poorly furnished, but it answered my purpose to perfection. Its mistress, an aged dame, very deaf, to whom water-soaked men (alive or dead, for that matter) were no great novelty, built up a fire upon the kitchen hearth, tossed us a pair of blankets to use as robes while our clothing dried, and then, on the strength of a few shillings supplied by my companion, brought from a tavern a

bottle of rum, which with two pewter mugs and a pitcher of water she placed upon a table between us. These good things accomplished, she left us to our own devices. In five minutes more the garments were steaming before the growing fire, and we were drinking a silent toast of mutual regard. With his grog lowered and his courage correspondingly heightened, the Londoner began to thank me most courteously for the service done him. I, of course, made light of it.

"Nay, nay," said he, earnestly, "you've saved my life. No denials, young man. You seemed a bit slow in coming——"

"Sir, the more haste the less speed," said I, gravely.

"True enough," he answered, "true enough. I find no fault. The result, not the method, is the thing. How can I repay you?"

So suddenly did he plump this question at me that had I not foreseen it I must have made a botch of the reply.

"Sir," said I, quietly, "I am a gentleman."

"In straits?" he suggested, with a keen look at me.

"Temporarily," said I, as an amendment.

He was up in an instant, and had pulled a long wallet from a pocket of his drying raiment. Truly, I have seldom seen a person so swift in his movements as this round little chap could be.

"Sir," said I, coldly, "I desire no reward."

"You must permit me," he cried.

"No, sir," said I. "I must decline your gifts."

"But——" he began, stubbornly.

"Well, then," said I, yielding a trifle, "if you so strongly urge me, let us say a loan,—a small loan, to be paid to the uttermost farthing."

"As you will have it," said he. "How much will you borrow?"

"Oh, twenty pounds or so," said I, carelessly. "But let the purse be unopened till our clothes are fit for wear. Meanwhile, another glass, or rather mug, with you."

"Agreed."

"Sir," said I, when the good liquor had gone to our reward, "unless I mistake, you own that ship anchored yonder."

"I do," he answered. "Woe's me, I do."

"Now, with no wish to pry into secrets," said I, "I'll confess her plight interests me."

"And no wonder!" he cried, pounding the table with his mug. "Such a peck of troubles never was dreamed of! A ship under arrest, a crew perishing with disease, a fortune in the hold, and not a word for the owner, save commands that he may neither board her nor communicate with her people."

"So?" said I. "How came it all about?"

"She was coming up Channel, homeward bound," said he, dropping his voice. "One foggy morning a cursed lugger appears along-side, but sheers off promptly as the mist clears. By some devilish bad luck a revenue cutter is discovered within musket-shot. What's the result? Why, the blockheads aboard the cutter will have it that something's wrong. The lugger gets away, but my ship is ordered into Portsmouth. There, finding smallpox aboard, they send her here, for quarantine and further investigation of the charge of smuggling. I hasten

down as fast as horse-flesh can bring me, and am refused permission to despatch word to her or receive word from her."

"Humph! a serious condition," said I, dryly.

"But there was no attempt at smuggling," said he, earnestly. "Of that I'm well convinced."

"Yet ten minutes with the ship's master might be desirable," said I. "At least, 'twould strengthen your faith. Still, in a few days, perhaps—"

"A few days!" he cried, hopping to his feet, and fairly dancing in his excitement. "Hell and furies! Look at this!"

And with that he tore open the wallet, and, picking out a folded paper, with a seal or two to add to its impressiveness, threw it upon the table.

"What's that?" I asked, but I did not touch the thing. A legal document may be a very serpent for treacherous wound to him who handles it.

"A summons, man, a summons!" he answered. "I'm ordered to London without delay to give evidence in a cause on trial. Oh, I know whose hand is in this business, and he shall sweat therefor. 'Twas served upon me to-day."

"And you cannot bear to obey it without first learning the truth from the skipper of your craft?"

"Precisely. Failing an interview, I'd give a hundred pounds for half a dozen lines."

"Well, then," said I, softly, "for one hundred pounds I'll fetch you this news by which you set such store."

"How?" he gasped, incredulously. "The government's men guard her night and day. No boat can reach her."

"I'll need no boat. But, tell me, are there guards aboard her?"

"None: dread of the smallpox saves her from them. But patrols are on the beach by day, and they have a boat lying near her o' nights."

"But not too near, I'll warrant."

"No," said he, with a grim laugh. "Trust 'em, the villains, to run no risk of contagion."

I charged my mug again, and emptied it slowly, meditating the while upon the situation. The job was one of neither glory nor allurement—but one hundred pounds! Mind you, in the last fortnight I had had my first taste of actual poverty, and my mouth was still puckered from the bitterness of it.

"Sir, I have a scheme," said I, looking up after a space. "After all, the difficulties are not too great. Now, Mr.—Mr.—?"

"Alfred Snow," said he.

"Well, Mr. Snow, to-morrow night you shall have the truth."

"But the summons?" said he, irresolutely.

"Won't lose its virtue by waiting," said I. "Besides, by midnight to-morrow you may be on your journey to London. Order a conveyance for that hour, if you wish."

He sat for a moment, his fingers beating the devil's tattoo upon the table. His hesitation galled me somewhat, for all the peril of the

undertaking fell to my share. But so did the hundred pounds, which he was as anxious to give as I was to take. Soothed by this reflection, I awaited his pleasure.

"Who are you?" he asked, abruptly.

"I'm called John Holmes," said I.

"Of this place?"

"No."

"So much I might have known," said he, half to himself.

"Truly you might, being a person of experience," I rejoined, dryly.

"You'll risk your life," said he.

"And you your money," said I, "but each will be satisfied with his hazard."

"Yes, yes," he answered, more cheerily, being reassured, perhaps, by the obvious truth that had I desired him harm he might now be resting under a dozen feet of water.

"We'll declare it a bargain, then?" said I.

"A bargain," said he, and he gave me his hand upon it. "But what do you propose to do? Can I assist you in the preparations?"

"Never mind the method," said I; "but in other particulars you can aid me greatly. For instance, I must come to you at your inn to-morrow night. Probably you're under surveillance——"

"I know I am," he broke in.

"Hence there must be an excuse for the visit. That seal ring of yours will answer. Let me have it. In the morning you will discover its loss, raise a great to-do, and offer a reward for its return. Do you take me, sir?"

"Surely, surely!" said he, eagerly, drawing the ring from his finger and tossing it to me.

"Moreover, you will have something to say to the inn's people of the summons. Explain, if you wish, that only the loss of this prized keepsake detains you."

"Indeed I shall say enough," he answered.

"But not too much," I counselled. And then, going close to the fire, I began to put on my clothes, from which a little of the dampness had been driven.

"We'd best part quickly," I explained. "You may tarry here until these things of yours are fairly dry. Don't mention this adventure. The old woman may be good enough to keep her mouth shut: we'll have to take the chances. But now, if I may trouble you for that loan, I'll bid you adieu. Thanks. Until to-morrow night, then."

So I left him, and hurried to the house where Charlie lay. At the door the good woman met me with most unexpected tidings. Soon after my departure on the stroll to the beach, a stranger had called.

"Ah!" said I, as coolly as might be. "Did he mention me by name?"

"'Twas all a mistake, Mr. Holmes," she answered. "He talked of Slate or Sleight, or the like—I'm not justly sure."

"A fine, big, broad man?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"A spindling, hangdog fellow, then, tall and thin; no gentleman?"

This time she nodded, adding particulars which confirmed my suspicion of the visitor's identity. She told me, too, that he had pushed into the house and into the room where Charlie was, but, seeing the lad asleep, had gone out again without arousing the invalid. Moreover, he had made profuse apologies for his blunder, requesting her to say nothing of the matter.

"Well, well, Mrs. Carrick," said I, "I'm sorry you were disturbed. But, after all, I'm glad he saw how ill the lad appears. If there be decency in his soul, he'll have regrets for invading a sick-room. I'll have a look for the fellow to-morrow."

Thus I put her off, but long after she was safely slumbering I sat on the step of the house, turning over in mind the various devices by which Friend Hopkins might have found me out, and the means most likely to checkmate the hostile moves he was pretty certainly preparing.

VI.

Early the next morning I was abroad, for many matters were to claim my time. First and foremost was a quiet tour of observation, from one end of town to the other, which yielded no trace of the enemy. He was harbored by none of the inns: of so much I made certain. There was, however, no comfort in the fact; for, to my way of thinking, it proved merely that Hopkins was showing a degree of generalship in his campaign. I was satisfied that his operations the night before had been based on a thorough knowledge of my movements. No doubt, after seeing me leave the premises he had entered Mrs. Carrick's house, intending to carry off the boy, but, finding the youngster ill and overestimating the gravity of his case,—and Charlie, though convalescent, looked a very poor, weak body,—he had changed his intention, and had gone away to prepare for the execution of a new project. It may be that had I felt no great interest in the lad I might have figured out an answer to the problem Hopkins offered for solution; but concern in the outcome was too personal to give intelligence full sway. Passion is a drag upon reason; even honest affection is a handicap. So, while I made guesses not wholly without shrewdness, I missed the real key to the puzzle.

Before noon I was back at Dame Carrick's house, borrowing from her an old suit of her husband's, who, it may be explained, was a sailor and then from home. Rolling the garments about a pair of shoes, I thrust the bundle under my arm and set out for the beach. Sauntering idly along the water-front, as if with no idea but to kill time, I passed the old pier, and soon came to the border of the town. A little distance beyond the last of the cottages a thin tongue of land stretched out into the bay for fifty yards or more. Near the point of it was a heap of rocks, full of nooks and crannies, in one of which I presently stowed away the bundle, hiding with it a flask of rum. These things I did so slowly and carefully, and with such pains to

satisfy myself that there was no spectator of the proceedings, that an hour or more had slipped away before I turned toward the town. The ship lay motionless, nor could I observe signs of life aboard her. There was something about the whole appearance of this ill-fated craft which made me glad to get my back to her and quicken my pace. For the moment, I confess, my heart sank at the business before me; but, luckily, such moods are short-lived in my case, and after a bit I was myself again. Perhaps a mug of ale, had at a tavern by the shore, helped in the good work.

I tarried with Charlie through the afternoon, talking, playing at draughts, in which the vicar had given him some training, or sitting in silence with his hand in mine, as happened to be the lad's fancy. 'Twas good to mark how his strength had increased in the last day or two, proof of which was to be had from the livelier interest he displayed in what there was to tell him of the humdrum happenings of Dame Carrick's modest establishment, and in gossip of the way affairs might have gone with the friends left behind in Starrow. Vicar, squire, and count, Mrs. Fielding, the innkeeper, the villagers and their dogs, all in turn were brought before us. Then the boy, dropping back upon his pillows, lay so quietly for a space that I thought he had fallen asleep, until I saw upon his face a smile too bright to be the token of a dream.

"What's the joke, youngster?" said I. "Let me have a share of it."

"Oh, I've just been thinking," he answered, opening his eyes widely enough to prove his wakefulness.

"Yes?" said I, encouragingly. "Of what, or of whom?"

"Why, of Peggy, of course," said he, smiling still more happily.

"Tut, tut, boy!" I cried. "What! faithful to her still?"

"Indeed I am, Uncle Jack."

"Well, Charlie," said I, gravely, "have a care, my lad. Don't be impetuous. Did you never discover an apple high up in a tree, which took your notion mightily? Sometimes you'll risk life or limb and climb the tree; but, if you'll wait, sooner or later, the apple will fall to you. So 'tis with woman. And if you dwell unduly on either maid or fruit, so much the longer the waiting will appear."

For which sound advice my reward was scanty; for Charlie closed his eyes, and, turning upon his pillows, nestled among them without so much as thanking me for my borrowed philosophy. Up I got in pretended wrath, but with the hour for action rapidly approaching. I called Dame Carrick aside.

"I shall be out till late to-night," said I. "To satisfy a whim, I'd like to have your stout neighbor the butcher sit with the lad while I am gone. Tell him he shall be paid for his time. And now for another trifle: in Charlie's name and mine, I wish you to accept this."

I put into her unwilling hand a little packet containing half the sum Mr. Snow had advanced. She tried to protest, but I would listen to nothing of the sort. At last she yielded, partly pleased and partly regretful, and a good deal curious, it may be, how her lodger had come into funds. Moreover, she agreed to secure the watchman I had

chosen; and so, feeling that the lad's safety was assured, at least for the night, I borrowed a fathom or two of strong cord, and set out for the beach.

Playing the careless lounger, I made my way along the water-front, exchanging a few words with the people encountered in my walk. Darkness was coming on, and the night promised to be most auspicious for the undertaking, black overhead with clouds, and with no breeze to ruffle the surface of the water. The old pier was a little within the southern edge of the town, and the tongue of land a little without it. My course lay northward, and when the land part of my journey had been completed I was also a mile from them, with a furlong or more between me and the northernmost dwellings. Roughly figured, the ship's distance from the point where I halted was about as great as the distance from the vessel to the cape where the bundle of clothing was secreted among the rocks. A single light burned in her fore rigging, and served to mark her position as she lay with her bow to the north. Between the ship and the beach was the guard-boat, rowing slowly about, but fairly certain, as I believed, to drop a grapnel so soon as the darkness should hide her from observation by the people on the shore.

From a pile of lumber near the water's edge I selected a piece of plank about four feet long, a foot wide, and two inches thick. To this I fastened the cord, leaving a loop big enough to allow me to pass my head and shoulders through it. Then I stripped, and, having hidden my clothing under some rubbish, picked up the improvised life-preserved and entered the water. The slope was gradual, but the bottom rough. As soon as possible I cast myself upon the plank and struck out for the ship.

By this time the guard-boat was lost in the dusk, and the taller vessel was but a smudge on the dark background of beclouded sky. After the first chill of it, the water was not too cold. The tide, so far as could be determined, was running no more strongly than I had estimated.

At first I swam straight out to sea, trusting to the current to bear me down toward the ship. Now and then I rested (the board serving to make this an easy matter), in order to calculate the drift. With each observation my confidence increased. But, even as I blessed the plank for the support it gave me, I perceived its disadvantages, for not only did it appreciably lessen my speed, but also its rough edges rasped my flesh abominably. More than once the temptation was strong to cast it adrift, but, not being anxious for death, I resisted the longing. So I paddled on, until the vessel seemed to be directly in the line of the tidal current. She was then probably not two hundred yards away.

Changing my direction, I swam for her light, though with no attempt at speed. I aimed to grasp her cable, albeit my plan for getting aboard her after that was very vague. Of the guard-boat nothing was to be seen or heard, her crew no doubt being then disposing of themselves as comfortably as possible for their vigil. Little by little the shadowy outlines of the ship's hull and rigging took shape, and I

swam still more slowly, peering anxiously before me for the cable. To fail to reach it might have been a grave misfortune; yet, though my vision was good and my vigilance unrelenting, I almost missed the mark. As it was, I caught the hawser by a desperate effort, just as the tide was sweeping me by it.

I clung for a moment or two to the huge rope, wondering the while what next was to be done. From the surface of the water the ship seemed to tower to a tremendous height, the flaring bows curving above me like an ebony arch. So black indeed was the mass of the vessel, her riding light being now shut out from view, that my sensation was akin to that of one who finds himself halted before the overhanging entrance of a cavern. 'Twas a curious feeling, and I have known more joyous. Save for the ripple of the tide about the cut-water, there was no sound. A phantom ship, manned by goblins, could have been scarcely more silent.

"Ship ahoy!" I hailed, prudently lowering my voice almost to a whisper; for I had no mind to give the guard-boat a hint of my presence. "Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!"

No answer came. Again I called, this time somewhat more loudly, but again without reply. Fairly puzzled, I held to the cable, debating whether to venture a still louder summons, when of a sudden there broke out overhead a peal of wild laughter, so shrill and gruesome that, from the surprise of it, I all but lost my grip and went adrift.

"Ship ahoy!" I repeated, but even more faintly than I had hailed at first.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the response. "Ho, ho! Ha, ha! Oh, oh, o-h!" The cry died out in a lingering wail, such as one hears in the notes of night-birds.

"Up above there! Quick, toss me a rope," I sung out, a degree more vociferously; for, whatever the source of the merriment, ghostly or human, the noise of it was likely to bring the guard-boat down upon me. Besides, the chill of the water seemed to have intensified, and my teeth were clicking like castanets.

"Merman or maid, fish or devil, avaunt, avaunt! Hence, and repent thy sins! Here all is peace. Away with thee!"

Now, there was slight cheer or hospitality in this address out of the darkness, but 'twas better than the frightful cackle which had gone before.

"Throw me a line," said I. "Hurry, whoever you may be. And keep quiet, I beg you."

"A rope to hang thee? On thy head be it, then. And, later, round thy traitor throat. Cerberus, approach and cast down a line."

"Ahoy there!" came a gruff voice, but sunk to a deep throaty rumble, which signified at least a willingness not to rouse the crew of the guard-boat. Better still, this second voice seemed to proceed from somewhere on the ship itself, and not from the blackness above me.

"A messenger from the owner," I explained. "Help me to board you."

"Have you a boat? I can't see none."

"No; I've swum out to you. Make haste; I'll tell you all when I'm on deck," I answered, mightily pleased to have roused somebody whose bodily existence was beyond cavil.

"Drop down to the main chains, will ye? There I'll be waitin' for ye."

"All right," said I, and, quitting the cable with some regret, paddled along the ship's side,—the one away from the beach,—keeping the hull in touch, until I gained the meeting-place. Then a line splashed into the water. I made it fast to my float, and climbed with some difficulty, until a brawny hand caught my arm and helped me to complete the ascent. The sailor kept his grip upon me even when I stood upon the deck.

"Who be ye?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"A messenger from the owner, Mr. Snow," said I. "Take me somewhere where I can see whom I'm talking to, and I'll tell you the rest."

"You're no bloody rev'nue spy?" he asked.

"No, I'm not," said I, sharply. "Do you suppose one of the gentry would board you as I have?"

He mumbled something, but the argument seemed to impress him; for, bidding me follow, he stumped aft, and presently ushered me down a companion-way to the cabin, where a swinging lamp burned dimly. A rough, unornamented, low-ceiled interior, a table with a few chairs about it; so much I made out, and then turned to survey my guide. He was a thick-set seaman, with grizzled hair and beard, and small, deep-set eyes. Before I could address him, a second man came bounding down the ladder and threw himself into a chair at the head of the table.

"To judgment, wretch!" he yelled. "Kneel before the king, or off with thy head! Naked, art thou? Naked thou camest into the world, and naked shalt thou leave it."

If I recoiled a step, 'twas no shame to my courage. For this newcomer was such a figure as I had never seen before; emaciated almost to a skeleton, hollow-cheeked, with eyes that blazed with an uncanny light. His clothing hung in rags upon his shrunken frame. About his head was bound a gay turban, beneath which showed a tangle of hair, long stranger to brush or comb.

"'Tis only Tony," said the stout sailor, tapping his forehead to complete the explanation.

"Oh! crazy?" said I, a good deal relieved. "Well, perhaps 'tis no wonder."

"None. Nine of eighteen dead, and seven more like to follow 'em. And him chained to this floatin' pest-house. Sometimes I reckon him the happiest of us."

"He called to me first?"

"Ay, ay. He was lyin' out on the jib-boom, as he'll do nights. He always had play-actors' words and ways. Now he thinks himself King of the Sea, mate, he does."

"But won't his shouts warn the guards that something unusual's happening?" I asked, anxiously.

"No fear o' that. They've heard him scores of times," he answered.

"Well, then, to business," said I. "Are you the ship's master?"

"Nay."

"Or mate?"

"Nay; bo'sun and actin' second mate."

"The others?"

"Dead."

"Your name?"

"Robert Pullen."

"Mr. Pullen," said I, choosing to finish my errand as quickly as might be, "your owner is ashore, almost out of his wits for news of this ship and her people. First of all, is there truth in the charge of dealings with smugglers?"

"None, by God! none."

"The lugger received nothing from you? no bales nor casks?"

"Not one. The fog lifted, and there she was within biscuit-throw. She asked our name, and sheered off. That's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—selp me!"

"So far, so good," said I. "Now for the disease. What do you need? Medicine or doctors, I suppose. What else?"

"They sent us surgeons from a war-ship," said he, "and they stocked us with drugs. Ye'll smell sulphur, if ye sniff. We burn it daily, in hopes to kill the poison in the air before the poison kills the rest of us."

"Incense before the king!" broke in the madman, springing up and clapping a hand like a bird's talon upon my bare shoulder. His gruesome touch was enough to make one's blood run cold. I shook him off as gently as I could, having thought of his condition; and Pullen forced him back to his place.

"Now get me paper, pen, and ink," said I, "and I'll put down what you say." He rummaged about in a state-room opening from the cabin, presently fetching the articles. I wrote out a brief statement, and asked him to sign it.

"Wait a bit," said he. "You've said who ye be: now prove it, before I put pen to paper."

"The proof! the proof!" cried Tony, half rising from his seat, but Pullen's heavy hand restrained him.

"Be sensible," said I, with some heat. "Look you, friend, the way I've come should be enough. Besides, what earthly harm can befall you from telling the plain facts?"

"I'll speak, but sign no dockyments," he answered, stubbornly.

Then, by rare fortune, I remembered Mr. Snow's seal ring. I had it with me, thrust on a finger, with a guard of twine tied above it to make sure that it did not slip off during the long swim. There was a chance that Pullen might have seen it. At least there should be among the skipper's papers some letter with the impression of the die upon the wax. So much I made clear to the boatswain, who listened civilly enough, but made no move. Tony, however, came to the rescue; for up he got, and, running to the master's berth, was back in a moment with a handful of documents which he tossed upon the table.

"Our royal edicts," he proclaimed. "Read them, slave, and choose by which wouldst die. They all say death, and mostly drowning."

The reflection came to me that this poor wretch had a notion of ruling in which sane monarchs have shared, but, though the thought was pretty, I suffered it to pass unspoken, especially as time pressed, and one of the letters atop the pile looked promising. It proved to be from the owner and to bear his seal.

"Get me a candle," said I, and when Pullen had supplied one, I held it near the flame of the lamp. Then, pressing the ring against the softened tallow, I had as clever a reproduction of the device upon the letter as doubter could wish to see.

"Now will you sign?" I demanded, triumphantly.

Without a word, Pullen took up the pen and slowly traced the letters of his name, which may have been the limit of his powers in that direction. Moreover, he gave me a small metal tobacco-box, which he warranted water-tight, to protect the paper in carrying it to land. This box, having a ring at one end, was easily slung by a string about my neck.

"Ye'll have a dram before ye go?" said he, taking a black bottle and a glass from a locker. I drank his health gladly, for there was need of the stimulant, and I rubbed some of the liquor upon my body and limbs, in hope of lessening the stiffness which had assailed the muscles since leaving the water. Then the three of us mounted to the deck, and advanced to where the plank was fast alongside.

"You'd best keep your friend quiet for a while," said I. "How about the boat, though? Can you make her out?"

The boatswain crossed to the rail, and, leaning upon it, gazed out into the darkness.

"I can't sight her, and I don't hear no oars," said he, coming back to us. "Lor' love ye, mate, them chaps won't let poor Tony's howlin's disturb 'em."

I groped about until I found his hand, and he returned the pressure with a grip as sincere as a bear's hug, and almost as disabling.

"Good-by, and better luck!" said I, crawling over the bulwarks and descending the rope. What answer Pullen might have made was checked by his need of suppressing the lunatic, who essayed a wailing adieu, and who was reduced to silence only after a scuffle, the noise of which reached my ears as I threw myself upon the plank. The tide swept me clear of the ship pretty smartly; and when the lights of the town were no longer hidden by her hull I steered straight for them. There was a certain need of vigorous movement of my limbs, which had been sadly chilled in spite of the rum taken both internally and externally. In fact, my attention was devoted at first rather to limbering them for the business before them than to getting definite bearings for my course, though the latter question began to puzzle me sufficiently in a few minutes. From the circumstances of the case I had been able to figure out only in a general way what should be the lay of the land, so to speak, when viewed from the water. My calculations, it must be admitted, had been faulty.

"That beacon furthest to the south should be near the pier," thought I. "Now, then, to try to keep above it."

With this end in view I swam steadily, until a glow of light showed over my right shoulder. Sure enough, 'twas some fellow on the guard-boat putting fire to his pipe and giving me an undesigned hint of that craft's whereabouts. Thereupon I took a rest, letting the current bear me to a safer neighborhood. Nor did I strike out again until satisfied that cause for alarm was removed.

I cannot, in sincerity, style the rest of my voyage pleasurable. What with the tide, the drag of the plank, the pain of salt water in the wounds inflicted by the splinters, the growing fatigue from unwanted efforts, and other difficulties of the sort, my progress was distressful in the extreme. Once I caught myself thinking of my relations, which, being an unpleasant recollection, and a bad sign to boot, made me redouble my efforts. Perhaps this had its compensations, and thus my kinsmen may have proved more useful than I had supposed they could be; for, as the event was, I made the end of the tiny cape without a yard to spare, and with precious little energy left in legs or arms, beyond so much as enabled me to crawl upon the rocks, where I lay, my heart pounding my ribs and my lungs wheezing like a pair of leaky bellows.

VII.

It may have been ten minutes before I was so far recovered as to hobble over the little distance which lay between the landing-place and the cranny in the rocks where the clothing was concealed. Rejoiced as I was to find the bundle undisturbed, there was even more satisfaction in laying hands upon the flask and in devoting its contents to a proper use. I gulped down the liquor as freely as if it had been water, and much more eagerly, and, thus invigorated, dressed hurriedly. Then I set out for Mr. Snow's inn, feeling on the whole reasonably pleased with the result of the visit to the ship, and with my escape from observation after reaching the cape. For I should have been sorely grieved to come under anybody's notice while the fatigue of the venture was so patent. I was no experienced swimmer, to be sure, but I should have regretted any advertisement of my slight prowess. Strength is a thing not to be boasted of, but 'tis shame to a man not to possess his share.

A few stragglers were to be seen in the streets, from which circumstance I judged the hour to be comparatively early; and this impression was confirmed, when I approached the hostelry, by an air of bustle about the building and its vicinity. In the stable-yard several lanterns were gleaming, proof that travellers had either just arrived or were about to depart. Pausing in a sheltered nook, I watched the hostlers moving about two carriages, neither yet horsed, but both seemingly in preparation for a journey. One beyond question was for Mr. Snow, but how of the other? While I was considering this query and the possibility of its interest to me,—for, with knowledge that Hopkins

was prowling somewhere in the neighborhood, suspicion needed no spur,—a pair of hulking fellows emerged from a shed and sauntered across the yard in my direction. The lanterns sufficed to let me get a notion of their appearance and to perceive that they were strangers, at least not of the tavern's usual hangers-on.

"So twelve's the hour to turn the bloomin' trick?" growled one as they passed me, almost brushing my shoulder, but for all that not discovering me in my nook.

"Yes; barrin' earlier word from Jerry," the second answered.

Now this bit of dialogue (I heard no more of it) startled me after a fashion which a reader can hardly comprehend unless he takes the pains to put himself, in imagination, in the position in which I was at that time.

The Haven was a quiet town, where midnight departures were rare and curious occurrences. Some unusual undertaking was on foot. If I assumed that Hopkins was allied with the twain and the third man whom they called Jerry, the odds were that a conspiracy to carry off the boy was coming to a head, and, since I lacked definite information, it behooved me to look to the chances. There were many "ifs" in my calculations, but 'twould be pleasanter in the end to have erred on the side of safety. Ergo, the course of wisdom was to do something at once. Better extra precautions now than a chain of explanations afterward.

I walked on to the door of the inn, making a poor figure, I fear, as I came into the glare of the lights. Carrick's garments were for service, not for show, and fitted me indifferently. The honest seaman's rough woollen cap was pulled far down upon my forehead. Besides, my gait by nature adapts itself to my attire, and, as I limped somewhat from the cuts and contusions upon my limbs, I must have been a sorry spectacle. Yet, inasmuch as I had no desire for recognition, the vagabond look, no doubt, was not without its compensations.

"Hey, there, friend," I drawled, as a barman passed me, "have ye a gentleman here who wants to find a ring?"

"'E's 'ere," said the fellow, giving me a supercilious glance.

"Show him to me, will ye?" said I.

"'Ave you found hit?" he asked, quickly.

"Ay, that I have," I answered.

"Then let me take hit to 'im."

"Nay, friend, I tempt no man's honesty."

"Wot's that?"

"Just a way of praisin' yer honesty," said I. "Where's the gentleman?"

"No. 14," he snarled, after a pause, in which, perhaps, he debated punching my head. "Find 'im yourself." And off he went on whatever his business was.

Nobody appearing to hinder me, I climbed the stairs, and found No. 14 with no great trouble. Mr. Snow opened the door in answer to my knock.

"Come in, come in," he cried, seizing my hand. "Have you word for me? Speak quickly, I pray. Suspense is killing me."

"It kills many, especially gallows-birds," said I, taking Pullen's statement from the box which still hung at my neck. "There, read that, Mr. Snow."

He swooped down upon the paper as a woman gambler pounces upon her winnings.

"Satisfactory?" I asked, when he had read it through half a dozen times.

"As nearly so as anything could be from such a sad tangle," said he. "How did you contrive? Tell me what you did."

I gave him the story briefly, and, though he shook his head sorrowfully at the account of the poor madman and of the number of victims of the disease, the written denial of the charge of connivance with smugglers plainly counted for more than all the rest. Strange, is it not, how little others' sufferings may seem beside the safety of good hard dollars? But this I must say: as I watched his face my liking for Mr. Snow (though I knew him to be in trade) was less than it had been before or has been since. Truly, I was glad to end the tale.

"I am deep in your debt, Mr. Holmes," said he, earnestly. "The hundred pounds shall be yours, but peril of life is not to be measured in money. There may be opportunities——"

"Sir," said I, not wishing him to overestimate what had been done, "scores of men could——"

"Nonsense!" said he, quickly. "You were the man at hand; that's the point. Now for the consideration: will you have a cheque?"

"Rather the money," said I; "but if 'tis inconvenient——"

"Here," said he, "I'll give you twenty pounds, and a cheque for the balance, which I shall honor with pleasure when you come to London. If I'm not mistaken,"—and he looked at me keenly,—"the city air is to your liking. Understand me, the reward is not the limit of my gratitude. Can I serve you?"

"Yes, Mr. Snow, you can," said I. "I have a boy whom I wish removed from this town to-night. Will you give him room in your carriage?"

"A boy?" said he, doubtfully. "An infant, I presume?"

"No; half grown," said I.

"What?" he cried, "and at your age?"

"Eh?" said I, not catching his meaning. "My age? I don't take you, sir."

"But surely you are very young, Mr. Holmes, to have a son——"

"A son? Ho, ho! No; a nephew," said I, getting clue to his perplexity. "The lad has been ill, but is convalescent. Matters which will need no explanation to you as a man of the world necessitate his immediate departure. He is now at a house in a street near the edge of the town. Will you take him as you drive past, and carry him to an inn called the Sword and Gun, which you should reach about daybreak on the road to London? Have him put to bed there, and bid him keep to his room until I join him in two days or less. Will you put me under eternal obligations, sir?"

"Gladly!" he cried, the touch of mystery and the reference to him as one of worldly experience doing yeoman's service, perhaps, in quick-

ening his willingness. "How shall I reach the house where the lad is to be found?"

I supplied the information he sought, returned his ring, and took the twenty pounds he proffered.

"Nearly half after ten," said he, looking at his watch. "I'll start when you wish. Name the hour."

"Eleven," said I. "By that time I shall have the boy ready to be popped into your carriage. Till then, good-night."

As I slipped out of the inn and crossed the entrance to the yard, I noted that the horses had not yet been put to either carriage. Nor were the worthies whose talk I had overheard anywhere in sight. Presently, having walked steadily rather than rapidly, I was at the entrance of the street leading to Mrs. Carrick's house. The clouds had lightened somewhat, and in the sky to the south a few faint stars were twinkling, but the night was still dark, and the houses might have been deserted, so far as signs of life went. In truth, 'twas difficult to distinguish even the buildings, which showed more like shapeless patches of shadow than stoutly constructed habitations. Yet, for all the darkness, I made out something suggesting the figure of a man crouched against the palings of a fence across the way.

"A sentinel?" thought I. "Perhaps; or he may be some drunken loafer homeward bound, but stranded. Well, the question can be answered."

So I went on down the street, whistling carelessly and stumbling now and then, as if my hold was full of something better than ballast. I even took the trouble to fumble with the door. Once within the house, I turned into Charlie's room. This room, as it may be well to explain, opened from the tiny entry, and was seldom used by the family, who looked upon it as a sort of state apartment, to be tenanted only on especial occasions. Mrs. Carrick and her son slept in the rear of the place.

The butcher was nodding in an arm-chair beside the lad's bed. He looked up when I lighted a candle, rubbing his eyes and yawning after the fashion of a man robbed of his rest. He was a brawny chap, as stout, I verily believe, as many of the oxen he had led to death.

"Anything happened?" I asked, in a whisper.

"Nay," he answered, rising from his chair.

"Bide a little," said I. "There'll be a crown for you if you stay here another hour."

He looked at me half stupidly, but, without objection, dropped back into his seat. Words with this worthy were few and far between.

Charlie was sleeping so soundly that my entrance and the low talk with the butcher had not roused him. For full five minutes I let the candle burn, putting it close to the window, that the watcher without, if indeed he were a watcher, might see the glow upon the curtain and suppose me busy with preparations for going to bed. Then, extinguishing the flame, I groped my way through the house, and, softly opening the back door, stepped into a yard, which, in turn, gave upon a path leading by a devious course to the street from which ours was an offshoot. This path was none too smooth, and I was in haste, yet,

except for a bruised shin, I reached the end of it without much difficulty. Then, stealing along as silently as possible, I came after a little to the corner whence I had observed the crouching figure. But now there was no shadowy blur upon the palings.

"Ah! a gentleman employed to spy upon my home-coming would think his duty done, after seeing me safely abed," I soliloquized. "'Tis a coincidence, to say the least."

I crossed the street, and groped along the turf near the fence, but found nothing. Still, I was by no means dissatisfied as I trotted back to the house by the winding path. The butcher was sunk in another doze, and the boy slept on tranquilly, though I relighted the candle. The clock on the wall pointed to five minutes of eleven.

"Charlie, my lad," said I, rousing him with some trouble, "come, get up. We've business to do, have you and I. You're to start on a journey at once. Listen attentively. Are you awake? do you understand me?"

"Yes, Uncle Jack," said he, opening his eyes widely enough to prove that the brain behind them was again ready for action. "Where are we going, sir?"

"This time you're to go alone," I explained; "that is, without me. But a fine old gentleman will have charge of you. You will go with him, in his carriage, and in the morning he will leave you where I shall rejoin you in a day or two. Don't be frightened—"

"I'm not frightened, sir," he broke in, with boyish heat at question of his courage.

"Of course you're not," said I. "You're made of better stuff. Come, now, let me help you into your clothes. And, remember, while you're with the gentleman you're to obey him. After he leaves you and until I'm with you again, you'll be your own master. Keep to your room, though. Don't allow anybody to lure you out of it on any pretext. Don't forget this."

"I'll remember, sir," he answered. "And, oh, Uncle Jack!"—here he seemed seized with a fresh enthusiasm,—"shall we see Peggy again?"

"Yes, yes," said I, perhaps a bit impatiently, "but say nothing of it, even to the old gentleman. And, Charlie, don't put too much faith in that maiden. Woman, even when caught young, is—"

A rumble of wheels and a patter of hoofs came to my ears and cut short the sound advice. Throwing a blanket about the boy, I picked him up—he was still under his due weight—and bore him from the room. The butcher, waking and displaying more presence of mind than might have been expected from his heavy face, sprang up and threw open the door. Out I stepped, to find a carriage halted in the street, and, by the help of its lamps, to see Mr. Snow leaning anxiously from the vehicle. In another moment the lad was hoisted in beside him.

"There's my boy," said I, quickly: "name, Charlie; condition, convalescent; directions, to be left at the Sword and Gun till called for. I'll see you in London within the week.—Drive on," this to the post-boy; "drive on, I tell you."

Before Snow could say anything (to be sure, there was no need for

him to speak), the vehicle was in motion. It rolled down the street at a good pace. As it disappeared, the butcher tapped my shoulder.

"Done with me, master?" he asked.

"Not quite," said I. "Come back into the house. You may take the boy's bed, if you like."

He followed me in without objection, and, sure enough, threw himself on the bed, where he promptly went back to his dreams. Putting out the candle, I drew a chair to the window, and sat awaiting what might happen. Another hour should prove whether or not the dangers against which I had guarded were more than fancied. Only an hour; but how it dragged! The clock seemed to be ticking minutes, not seconds; the snores of my companion were parted the one from the next by time enough to plan and commit a murder. Raising the curtain and peering from the window, I could make out no one stirring. If the noise of Snow's carriage had awakened any of the neighbors, they must have regained their slumbers most precipitately.

Slow work is waiting, but even to the most anxious watcher must come relief. At last the clock struck twelve. The moment when I should know whether all my pains had been wasted was at hand. I sat by the window, seeing nothing, hearing nothing but the monotonous sounds from the timepiece and the sleeper. For want of better occupation, I fell to counting the vibrations of the pendulum—sixty seconds, sixty more, sixty more, and so on, until twelve minutes had worn away. Then I heard something which banished the clock from attention.

Two men were coming down the street, quarrelling after the fashion of brawling drunkards. They halted before the house, apparently to fight out their dispute; for their growlings grew to shouts, and I could distinguish oaths and threats of the most ruffianly sort. Such was the disturbance that soon the neighbors were peering from their windows, and other voices were to be heard, bidding the unruly pair begone. Looking out, I dimly perceived the men reeling about, and striking at each other without seemingly doing much execution. But as their rage appeared to grow with every blow, and their shouts waxed louder and louder, 'twas but a moment or two before a score of heads were poked from windows on both sides of the way.

Now this street-fight, commonplace as it was, served to relieve the monotony of the vigil, and I was by no means sorry that the roughs had chosen to do battle. Besides, I had (and have) a weakness for a fight, as every man has, provided he be in health and not a victim to unnerving study or enervating doctrines. So, desiring to have a better view of what was going on, I picked up a stick and ran out of the house. A dozen more yielded to a similar temptation. The combatants honored us with slight attention. They kept up their cross-fire of profanity and abuse with undiminished vigor, lurching at each other now and then, but showing themselves either very drunken or very unskilled in the art which is by courtesy called self-defence. A couple of lanterns had been brought out by the spectators, and the light they gave should have sufficed sober men to complete their argument in short order. But the brawlers did no better than they had done when

darkness prevailed. Some of the onlookers, in fear lest they were to have little reward for forsaking their beds, began to join in the shouting, and, as if encouraged thereby, one of the fighters rushed fiercely at the other, who, giving ground, retreated down the street. Again and again was this programme repeated, the one assuming the offensive and the other the defensive, although, to save my soul, I could not have counted a blow which fairly told. We spectators followed, of course, cheering on the men with right good will, but commencing to tire of the sort of fighting with which we were being regaled. At last my patience ebbed.

"Here, here," I called; "this is no foot-race. Stand, you fools, and settle your grudge like men. Make a ring, friends, and make 'em stay in it."

The others jumped at the suggestion. A ring was formed, with the pair in the centre, and a dozen throats echoed the cry, "Fight, you fools, fight!" But, as the chorus rose, one of the men rushed at me. I thought it merely a result of his intoxication thus to seek a fresh foe, but was in no temper to trifle with him. Moreover, he was such a hulking fellow that, even though in liquor, he might have overpowered me. So, a memory of the count's lessons giving the hint, I up with the stick I carried, and thrust for his head. 'Twas a poor weapon,—a broken broom-handle, indeed,—and under a downward blow would have splintered upon his hard skull without doing much harm. But, luck favoring my aim in that uncertain light, the end of the stick caught him on the point of the jaw. He dropped as if shot, nor did he evince any desire to rise. His mate, seeing what had happened, sprang toward me, as he naturally would, peacemakers seldom being in much favor; but the townsmen interfered. In the ring were men who could box, and though the ruffian struck out manfully, and with an aim which had vastly improved of a sudden, other blows met his. 'Twas beautiful, but it could not last. Numbers prevailed, and down the fellow tumbled, knocking a lantern from its owner's hand as he fell.

Just at that moment, and before we could say aught to the pair on the ground, a shriek rang out upon the air. Up the street lights were dancing like frolicsome fire-flies. 'Twas hard to discover what was happening; for the drift of the flight had taken us nearly a hundred yards from Mrs. Carrick's house, near which the confusion appeared to be greatest. We ran to the rescue, but before we could arrive on the scene the trick had been turned. Two forms shot from the door. One fell heavily in the roadway with a howl of pain. Then the lanterns were whipped under cover, and we saw no more. A whip cracked. There was the noise of trampling hoofs and revolving wheels. When we reached the house the carriage in which the strangers had fled was dashing away at top speed.

The butcher, breathing hard, was standing in the door-way.

"They must ha' took me for the lad," he explained, briefly.

"They found their mistake?" said I.

"Thot they did," said he, complacently.

"Burst in upon you, and tried to carry you off, eh?"

He chuckled at the recollection.

"Two of them?"

"Two."

"One very tall and thin?"

"Ay, the one I kicked," said he, with another chuckle. "He fell hard, he did."

"His mate helped him up, and to the carriage, I suppose," said I. And then I took my honest ally's hand and wrung it, till the mirthfulness of the scene just enacted proved too much for me, and, dropping upon the door-step, I laughed until, compared with the ache of my sides, the stiffness of my limbs and the smart of my bruises were matters not worth remembering.

VIII.

Before daybreak on the second morning after the unsuccessful raid upon Mrs. Carrick's house I departed from the Haven, and early in the evening of the same day, having taken a somewhat roundabout route, over which it might puzzle spies to track me, I came to the Sword and Gun. There I found Charlie, none the worse for his journey in Mr. Snow's company, and rejoiced to behold me again, in spite of all the pleasurable novelty of being his own master for a season. From his story it appeared that our little programme had been carried out without a hitch.

The Sword and Gun was a small inn, very neat and clean, with which the boy and I had become acquainted on our earlier rambles. It was on the road the ship-owner would naturally follow in going up to London, and for that matter would be likely to be visited by investigators who had learned how Charlie and he had left the Haven. But there was little danger that Hopkins and his helpers could get the scent immediately. So complete had been their defeat, and so quickly had gossip about it spread through the town, that none of those concerned in the undertaking would have cared to risk tarrying within the border of the place, especially as the faces of most of the party had become more or less known to the townspeople. At least, such was the case with the underlings, of whose appearance I got a very good description on the day following the episode. Hopkins, however, had contrived to impress himself less distinctly upon my informants' memories, though there were enough vague accounts of a tall thin man to satisfy any doubts as to his participation in the proceedings. The course he would probably pursue would be to obtain a new agent and set him to work upon the inquiry, a vital point in which would be the discovery whether the boy was still under Mrs. Carrick's roof. Then would come a search for clues as to the manner of his disappearance, and for others as to my movements. In the end, there would be a fairly accurate understanding of what had happened. But all this would take time, and long before the pursuers could reach the Sword and Gun the pursued would have left that inn far behind them,

Of course it was as manifest as if he had sent me a proclamation in black and white that Hopkins was not acting in his own behalf. Even had I credited him with possessing the ingenuity displayed in the scheme for luring me away from the house,—in all honesty, the bogus fight had to be set down as a neat stratagem,—then for entering the door I should have left open in my haste to behold the brawl, and, finally, for bearing the boy to a waiting carriage, the expense of the performance would have been beyond his purse. Four, and perhaps five, men had been under his orders. Such retinues were not for clerks. Who, then, was the prime mover? In other words, who was Hopkins's employer? To this I could make no definite answer, but in my heart I believed that the gentleman upon whose toes I had trodden was the person at the bottom of the plot. After Best's death Hopkins and he might easily have come to an agreement. I confess that the theory tickled my fancy. The game, in brief, was widening beautifully.

The boy, though in fine spirits, was not yet back to his rightful strength. This I saw so clearly that on the night of rejoining him I determined to carry out a project towards which I had been favorably disposed. The next morning we bade farewell to the innkeeper. Travelling leisurely, but with many détours and doublings, we came after three days to a region both of us knew intimately. A carter who had given us a lift for several miles set us down in a lane familiar even in the dusk of evening. And half an hour later Mrs. Fielding's arms were round the lad, and the vicar, beaming with delight, was busting about his study, not because there was reason for him to be stirring, but because his joy was too great to permit him to be still.

Presently appeared the Misses Grant. The elder's greeting was kindness itself to Charlie, but her manner to me had something in it which I could not fathom, and more than once when I caught her eye there was in her look a strange element of something very like distrust. Miss Peggy, though, was most amiable, offering her cheek to my salute, at which civility her sister seemed by no means pleased. But to the boy the younger girl was a very nettle of disappointment, springing lightly back when he advanced too near, and leaving him in the middle of the floor, fit to stand as a picture of embarrassment.

“Tut, tut, Peggy!” cried the vicar's wife, sharply. “What freak possesses you now? Give Charlie your hand this instant, and tell him you're delighted to see him—as you are, you minx!”

But the perverse damsel only pouted, and put her hands behind her.

“She's pursed up her lips, Charlie,” I suggested, “maybe for whistling, maybe for something else.”

“But not for kissing,” said she, going from pout to grimace like a flash of lightning; “at any rate, not for kissing little boys.” And with that the coquette honored me with an undeniable wink.

“Go sit in the corner, you saucy girl,” said Mrs. Fielding, and Peggy, obeying the command without hesitation, soon had the boy by her side. I must say that, away from their seniors, the pair seemed to get on more amicably.

After a little the young people were sent away to bed, Mrs. Fielding escorting the returned wanderer. Then the vicar drew his chair close to mine. There was a good deal to tell him,—and much to be left untold,—but finally 'twas made clear to him that, owing to various circumstances, I had concluded to allow the lad to remain with him for a time.

"And you, Mr. Holmes?" he queried. "You will be here for a season, I trust."

"No; I'm off for London to-night," said I.

"Impossible!" he cried, hospitably.

"Quite possible, sir," said I, quietly. "Yes, I must start for the city at once. I shall leave Charlie in your care, feeling that he will be almost as safe as he would be with me. By the way, Mr. Fielding, may I request you not to let him wander far from the house for a month or so?"

"Indeed, I shall guard him as the apple of my eye," said he, warmly. "But, Mr. Holmes, do you fear any danger to him?"

"Well, in a manner, yes," said I. "He has been ill, as you know. There is, though, another matter: child-stealing is not an unheard-of crime."

The vicar smiled incredulously.

"Any child is liable to be carried off," said I, stubbornly, "and from this village as well as from anywhere else."

Country parson though he was, the vicar was no dullard.

"I shall watch over him as my own," said he, gravely, guessing that I was not arguing for talk's sake. "Would you regard the danger as threatening from any particular quarter?"

"Hardly," said I. 'Twas better to have his vigilance many-sided. It had not seemed worth while to go into the exact causes of our departure from the Haven, and I did not propose to enlighten him now. Perhaps, later on, he might get an inkling of the facts from Charlie, though, as it happened, the boy had very dim notions of what had taken place.

"Mr. Fielding," I continued, "you shall hear from me as soon as I've transacted my business in London. I shall, if possible, send an address to which you may write in case of need. May I ask you to treat my communications as strictly confidential,—at least not to be revealed to any one outside of your household?"

"Certainly, certainly," said he.

"Then we may regard everything as settled," said I. "Don't drive the boy to his books, sir. Time enough for reading when he's old and has nothing better to do. I can't tell you how long I may leave him with you. But, be his stay long or short, I don't wish to have his natural virtues warped."

"Charlie shall not be warped," he answered, with a queer little smile.

"Very well, then," said I, getting upon my feet. "I may as well take my departure."

"What! Now?" he asked, in surprise. "This is a very brief visit, Mr. Holmes. Surely you may spend the night?"

"Pardon me, sir, but go I must," said I. "Perhaps I may have lingered too long. I must tell you that recently I was exposed to the contagion of a most dangerous disease, and 'twould pain me deeply to have brought the deadly seeds to your home."

"Indeed!" said he. "What was the malady?"

"Smallpox," said I.

He shrank from me instinctively, and I saw that I should attain my object of cutting short my adieux.

"Terrible! terrible!" he cried. "Have you not had your garments disinfected, or——?"

"There is no danger on that score," I broke in. "I took most unusual precautions, sir. I'll guarantee the disease has no chance to use my garments as a vehicle. The boy has not been exposed at all, unless it be by bearing me company. If you will kindly conduct me to his room, I'll bid him good-by."

Mr. Fielding, candle in hand, led the way up-stairs, keeping well in advance. He opened a door, and pointed to a little figure on the bed. The lad was sleeping so sweetly that I would not disturb him. For a moment I gazed at the youngster, and then turned away. The vicar seemed to be surprised; for he stood stock-still in the door-way, as if he looked for further ceremonies.

"Mr. Holmes," he whispered, "you're leaving Charlie."

"Precisely," said I, puzzled by his manner, as well as by his unnecessary statement of a very patent fact.

"It may be for a long time," he went on, in the same low tone.

"Certainly," said I. "He is to remain here; I am to go away: in the circumstances I cannot avoid leaving him."

"If you care to awake him," said he, suggestively.

"Oh, no," said I. "'Twould do no good. Let him be comfortable."

"But at least you might——" The vicar left his remark unfinished, and, wheeling about, pretended to be looking intently into the passage. Evidently there was something on his mind.

"Well, what is it that I might?" said I, all at sea as to his thoughts.

"Don't you know?" he asked, over his shoulder.

"No," said I, curtly; but instantly a hint of his possible meaning flashed upon me, and I added, "Do you think I should kiss him, Mr. Fielding?"

"Of course I do," he answered, quickly. "What else could I think, Mr. Holmes? what else?"

"Rather anything else," said I, naturally provoked at the old man's sentimental nonsense. "Pshaw! The boy's asleep and helpless. How should I know that he'd like to be kissed by a man? I shouldn't, let me assure you; and I'll not credit, or discredit, him with poorer taste than mine. I don't understand you, sir; 'pon my word, I do not."

The vicar made no response. Instead, he walked down the stairs to the lower hall, with me at his heels. Near the great door we halted, and he turned to face me.

"Make my excuses to Mrs. Fielding," said I. "I regret exceed-

ingly that she is busy, but pray do not disturb her on my account. Good-by to you, sir, and many thanks for your kindness."

And, so speaking, I picked up my hat and whipped out of the house, without awaiting his words of farewell. I suspected that in the good man's heart there was relief to be rid of me; but likes and dislikes are not subjects of praise or blame, and I had no cause for complaint. Charlie would be well cared for till I could look about a little. How the old fellow had shied at the smallpox! In my mind's eye I could see him deep in consultations with his wife, devising means and methods to purify the house of the contagion I might have brought. Thus reflecting, I found myself whistling a brisk tune as I strode along on the first half-mile of my night walk across country to the London road, where early in the morning I might take coach for the city. There was no luggage to impede me; in my pocket was money sufficient for present needs; the night was fair and pleasant. What mortal could have asked more?

I shall not attempt to dwell upon the journey to London. In truth, my recollection of it is none too clear, and tales of such matters are dreary reading at the best. In proper season, and without accident, I was put down in the metropolis, and at the earliest opportunity paid my respects to Mr. Snow, who greeted me very kindly. In his own counting-house he showed to greater advantage than among the perplexities besetting him at the Haven. Cool, shrewd, clear-headed, skilled in affairs,—these qualities were his among his accustomed surroundings. He questioned me, but not too closely, informed me that he desired to promote my fortunes, and reached his climax by offering me the berth of supercargo aboard one of his ships, then about to sail for the West Indies.

"I'm no sailor, but I wish to see the world," said I. "As to the duties of the post I'm none too well informed."

"You'll learn," he answered.

"Well, if you can risk it, I can," said I.

"We'll make the trial," said he, with a dry smile. And thus the bargain was sealed by which, though I did not become a seaman, I went to sea. A letter to the parson, with my blessing and an enclosure of funds to defray Charlie's expenses, a few purchases in the way of a kit for the cruise, and I was ready to seek the other side of the globe.

IX.

And now am I arrived at a turning-point in the course of my narrative; for through this voyage arose new conditions, new advantages, and new difficulties; new friendships, and new outcroppings of old enmities. Fate's smiles were mingled with her frowns. The expected failed, the unexpected came to pass; accident proved mightier than forethought; luck's tide ebbed when the outlook was brightest, and flowed when chances were most desperate. 'Twas all a piece of the life that is worth the living because of the spice of its variety.

The Southern Princess, the vessel on which I sailed, was a fine ship of six hundred tons, well found, well manned, and ably navigated. Graham, her master, was a thorough seaman and a fair disciplinarian, though none too strict. Malloy, the chief mate, was a quiet, taciturn fellow, for all the good Irish blood which flowed in his veins. Friendly I was with both, but near to neither. An intimacy of a sort, however, sprang up between myself and the second mate. He was no sea-dog by choice, was Simon Northen, even if he knew his trade to perfection. He was not far from forty, slightly above my height, very powerful, with muscles like iron. His face was hard,—a long nose, a strong jaw, high cheek-bones, and keen, cold eyes, which never showed a gleam of gentleness in their light. Gruff was his manner, as a rule, though on rare occasions one caught a hint of breeding in it. Why he and I should have foregathered I cannot explain. Perhaps the knowledge that he who asks no questions gets no lies gave us a common meeting-ground.

We had in the cabin half a dozen passengers, who for one cause or another, but sufficient all of them, were leaving home. One was going to his plantations, another sought a warmer climate, a third had found England too hot for him. A fourth was a youngster so full of vivacity that he was travelling to foreign climes for his family's health, a bright, cheery boy, for whom I might have conceived a strong affection had time permitted. He was ever stirring about and busy with one pastime or the next. I speak of him and his games because, as it happened, through one of them I picked up a pretty accomplishment. In calm weather we often shot at a mark, the target being a bottle tossed overboard and either permitted to drift or else towed by a line when light airs gave the ship steerage-way. Then, after a time, we took to wing-shots, the bottle being thrown into the air. Aiming with a rest, I could do no greater execution than did the lad, or the others who joined in the sport, but at the quick snap-shots there was none to rival me. The trick seemed to be instinctive. Up would fly the target, up would come my pistol, bang would go the charge, and once in thrice, let us say (which, in the circumstances, is very pretty practice), some onlooker would cry, "A hit! a hit!" So pleased was the youth with this prowess that when he left the Southern Princess he pressed upon me a brace of pistols, fine double-barrelled weapons, small enough to be carried with comfort, yet big enough to do the work for which they were intended by Providence. I have them still, and once or twice they have been of some slight service.

All this forms a meagre account of the outward voyage, but 'tis sufficient, for I desire to omit details. There is, in fact, but one incident of my seafaring which needs a place here; and it occurred while the ship lay at anchor in a port of which there still may be reasons for not making too particular mention. We were to sail for home the following day, and, indeed, would have departed sooner, had it not been for rumors afloat of the presence in those waters of an enterprising craft whose skipper and crew had vague notions of *meum* and *tuum* and heard much too slowly of treaties. There was peace, by official accounts, but gentlemen of fortune sometimes paid little respect

to the doings of dull diplomats on the farther side of the Atlantic. We were armed, to be sure, but hardly armed to fight; and in the neighborhood of privateers, whose cousinship to pirates was close, the distinction was of importance. But, the latest scare having lessened, the Southern Princess was to spread her sails on the morrow.

Simon Northen, coming aboard after a day's run on shore, passed me as I leaned upon the rail where the shade of an awning tempered the heat. He went below, but soon reappeared with the ship's glass in his hand. Mounting the fore shrouds to the top, he sat himself down and fell to ogling the shipping at anchor near the harbor's mouth. Long and earnest was his study of the vessels. At last he laid down the tube, and glanced at the quarter-deck, where I still stood. Looking from under the awning's edge, I saw him beckon me to join him. Such was my curiosity that I was at his side very quickly.

"How are your eyes, Jack?" he began, in a softer tone than he often employed.

"In working order," said I.

"And your mouth?" he asked.

"Can keep closed without difficulty," I answered, understanding what he was getting at.

"Good!" said he. "In that case you'll hear something not to be blabbed."

"It shall be as between gentlemen," said I.

"And on your life, d'ye comprehend?" said he, with sudden fierceness.

"Yes, on my life," said I. "What is it?"

For reply he handed me the glass, which I turned in the direction in which he had been pointing it.

"Well, what shall I note?" I asked.

"You see that ship yonder,—the biggest one," he answered. "Tell me what you make of her."

"A rare bird for these days of British bull-dogs,—a Frenchman," said I; "high out of water, big stern windows, open just now for air, a shore-boat alongside, a—"

"Enough," said he, quickly. "Now, suppose her skipper berths t'other side of those windows: how'd ye visit him?"

"Without bothering him to man the side for me?"

"Exactly."

"Well, there's a way," said I, after another survey of the vessel. "A boat to drop under his stern at night, a ladder to climb to those fine large ports, in case no rope was dangling where 'twould be convenient. The boat should be light: one might wish to come away rapidly. A single friend could keep the boat in place and have an eye on the ship's people."

"Jack, my boy, you've hit my idea!" he cried. "But the ladder—what's your notion there?"

"Oh, a light pole," said I; "a pole with a hook at one end, and a few small helps to climbing lashed here and there along it, could be turned out without trouble."

"Yes; and, bloody bones! I know where to borrow just the boat," said he. "As for the second man—what say you, Jack?"

"Tell me what the stir's about," said I. "It goes no farther."

"On your oath?"

"Yes; on my oath."

"On shore last night," he began, fixing his eyes on mine, "I heard—well, blast me! never mind how I heard it. This'll be enough for you to know: the French skipper talked to another froggy when they thought nobody was near 'em. The poison those land-sharks sell for brandy hadn't quite stupefied me. I understand French. The second man gave the skipper a package, and promised to bring along another like it when he boarded the ship to-night. He's to take passage home on her."

"What's in the package?" I asked.

Simon bent his face to mine as he whispered, "Jewels."

"Eh?"

"They were a duchess's."

"A duchess's?"

"Yes; one of the nobility the Revolution drove out of France. She and her husband fled to this corner of the world, and stayed here—why, nobody knows. He died five years ago. She had to sell a few gems for food and clothing, but the best remain. She died six months ago."

"And the jewels?" I asked, with natural interest.

"Were stolen by a servant, who had accompanied the pair. He proposes to keep them,—at least, he hopes to save half, the balance going to the skipper for landing him in France. Being without funds, and not daring to dispose of any of the stones here, he had to put himself at his countryman's mercy. The captain is to take him aboard to night. The lot was split, each having a notion of keeping the other honest thereby. And, damme! while the captain's away from his ship, Jack, better men may profit. What say you, my buck?"

"Um!" said I, thoughtfully, "I have my doubts, Simon. There are nice points. Stay, though; their talk may have enlightened you on those very matters."

"The strength of the crew——" he began, but I cut him off by saying quickly that I cared little for what guards might be posted on the ship. Indeed, he greatly wronged me by the suspicion.

"'Tis the morality of the case which interests me," I explained. "If, for instance, the duchess died childless——"

"Not only childless, but without collateral heirs," Northen broke in. "They dwelt upon the point in their talk. 'Tis lucky you reminded me."

"And if she left no will——" I continued.

"None: that also was mentioned," said he.

"Nor had expressed any wishes——"

"Not a wish: she died of a sudden seizure."

"Nor had desired the servant to inherit?"

"Not she. The fellow admitted so much to his co-conspirator. I

recollect the very words of his confession. These old retainers are thieves and scoundrels."

"Too true! a sad set of rascals they are," said I.

"So you see," Simon went on, insinuatingly, "these jewels are *feræ naturæ*, fair prey to good men. Are you satisfied?"

"In a measure," said I.

"Come, come, Jack!" exclaimed Northen, "I'll make the whole thing plain to you. I board the ship; the jewels in due course become mine. Then I, for the sake of friendship, present you with a share. You, sitting peaceably in the boat, have had naught to do with the acquiring of them. Your conscience can be as clear as crystal."

"What present might your generosity suggest?" I asked.

"Two-fifths," said he, after a moment's thought. "Curse me, but that's fair."

"Simon, I can't resist your logic," said I. "About nine o'clock to-night I shall be pleased to set out with you to punish this faithless lackey's treachery."

He nodded complacently, but made no other reply. In a moment or two, as he was still silent, and more disposed to study the French ship than to talk, I left him, and made my way back to the deck. Simon tarried at his post of observation for some time, perhaps half an hour. When he descended he went below to his berth. Presently he reappeared, togged out for a land cruise, and I heard him call to three of the sailors to get into the quarter-boat, which lay at the gang-way, and put him ashore.

"Be on deck at nine," he whispered, as he moved by me. "A boatman will hail you."

In the course of the afternoon the chief mate remarked incidentally that Northen had leave of absence until midnight. My duties being of the slightest, the time went heavily. My preparations for the task before me were simple in the extreme: slipping the two pistols and a sharp knife into my pockets, I was ready for what might happen.

After the short twilight of those latitudes the night came on, still, clear, and moonless, with the stars twinkling lazily overhead. The ship was very quiet, with only the chief mate lounging on the quarter-deck and a few of the hands grouped forward. From one of two or three vessels anchored astern of us came sounds of a fiddle, but the musician's mood seemed to be tender, and the airs he played were borne but faintly to my ears. I doubt if the fellow's art was better than the crudest, but the water is kind to halting harmonies, and the strains swept over the smooth surface not unpleasantly. Curiously enough, as I listened, my zest for the evening's undertaking appeared to lessen. For want of other occupation, I fell to peering over the side. Low down on one hand was the glimmer of the town; on the other were the lights of the vessels clustered near the harbor's mouth. Nowhere could I make out a boat approaching the ship. Two bells had gone; Northen was late: perhaps on second thought he had determined to make his venture alone.

"Massa! massa! Bu'ful ebenin'. Hab a boat, massa?"

I sprang to the rail, from which I had wandered a little. How

any man could have sent a boat alongside without attracting attention was hard to tell, yet there one was, floating within half a dozen feet of our hull. Its single occupant was looking up at me. The voice had been that of a negro, thick and guttural: the upturned face in the faint light of the stars seemed black as jet.

"Fun ashō', massa," said the boatman, persuasively; "music, de dance, ebertyng."

Had Simon engaged another aide? Indeed, was this his boat? Where was he? Nobody was cuddled up in the bow or stern: of so much I was sure—and of nothing else.

"Are you sent——?" I began, but checked my tongue in time. In any case I was unlikely to get information from the negro.

"Fun ashō', massa," he droned; "fun ashō'."

"Damme, but I'll go you," said I; for I was aweary of waiting. And over the rail I scrambled and down the side, with the assistance of a rope I had ready for such use. The darky, with a dexterous stroke, sent his little craft under my dangling feet. Before I was fairly settled in the stern-sheets the boat was many yards from the Southern Princess. As he bent to his oars my companion's face came close to mine, but, try my best, I could not recognize in him one of the watermen who hung about the shipping.

"Where ye bound?" I asked. "You're not heading for the town?"

"No, massa, no," he answered. Then, with a quick change of tone, "Jack, my boy, how d'ye like the impersonation?"

"Simon?" I cried. "How, by all that's unholy——?"

"Ay, Simon; but there's no cause to howl about it," said he, sharply.

"Right you are," I answered. "Anything for me to do?"

"No," said he, and pulled on swiftly yet silently. 'Twas a pleasure to observe his work, so smooth, so easy, and so telling. The light boat glided through the water as if there were nothing weightier than air before her. Over her bow a dark mass was beginning to take shape.

"Look ahead, Simon," said I, softly. "She's not so far off now."

He ceased rowing, and, half turning on his thwart, gazed in the direction indicated.

"Now for orders, Jack," he answered, after a moment's survey. "I'll take us in. Once the pole's in place and I'm swarming up it, you take charge of her. Keep the boat in position. 'Twill be no trouble; there's mighty little current. When I return, be ready for me; that's all. There's a second pair of sculls for you forward."

"Ay, ay," said I.

He took his oars from the rowlocks very carefully, stowing them away inboard. Then, shifting his position so that his face was to the bow, he picked up a paddle from the bottom of the boat, and fell to work again, with a deft skilfulness good to behold. The single blade entered and left the water without a sound, yet the distance of one little phosphorescent gleam from the next showed that our speed was considerable. The ship grew bigger, her outline more distinct. She was a lumping craft, and no doubt the darkness made her look even taller than she was. I know that the loom of her brought vividly to recol-

lection the plague-ship as that vessel had appeared to me while I clung to her cable. Of the two the Frenchman was much the larger, besides being less deeply freighted. As we approached still more closely we could hear the voices of men from her forecastle. At she seemed deserted, though probably somebody was stirring in that part of the ship. Presently we were under her stern. The big square ports, as dark as the rest of the vessel, were right above us. The boat's pace slackened till I could not perceive that she moved at all.

I felt the handle of Simon's paddle laid upon my knee,—in the shadow of the hull, so to speak, 'twas as black as a pocket,—and then I heard a faint rustle as he lifted the pole from its resting-place upon the bow. An instant later the faint line of it showed against the sky, and then came a muffled sound as the hook caught upon one of the sills above us. Then Simon was climbing swiftly, yet so silently that had I not known his plan I could hardly have guessed his movements. My eyes were of more service as he neared the top, and I could see him draw himself up to the ledge. Evidently his way was clear, for scarcely had I noticed his doings when he vanished. Next a dim glow from the window gave evidence that he had struck a light and was ready to search for the jewels.

So far all had gone most prosperously. My task, too, promised not to be troublesome, for under the lee of the ship there seemed to be no current. The boat was almost motionless. Sighting a star which shone near the ship's rail, I made up my mind that the drift could be measured in inches to the minute.

"Well, there's nothing to worry about," I reflected. "But how might Simon be flourishing?"

Time dragged. How many minutes had passed I knew not, but it seemed to me that Northen was lingering most unnecessarily. Why should I not have a look at him? 'Twould furnish occupation, and, besides, there might be advantage in keeping an eye upon my worthy friend. Very cautiously I felt my way forward, finding in the bow, as I had hoped, a neatly coiled painter. I slipped off my shoes, took a turn of the line about my left wrist, and, groping about until I caught the pole, began to climb, not with the ease and skill exhibited by Simon, but with a fair degree of success. Indeed, the feat was not difficult, for all along the pole, at suitable intervals, were knots of rope or some such contrivances, which were as good as the rounds of a ladder. Up I went until my eyes were above the ledge of the square port and I was gazing in upon Northen at his work. The berth, the skipper's as I reasoned, was a sizable sea-bedroom, decently furnished in nautical fashion. But I paid little attention to any of the fittings except a heavy desk or secretary fixed against one wall, in front of which Simon was kneeling. One of the drawers was open. A candle, set upon a stool, gave light enough to behold the operator's every movement.

Simon was bent forward, closely inspecting a necklace, the gems of which bravely flashed back the light when he twisted them about. They shone like so many stars. For an instant I was fascinated; then a motion of the man recalled me to my senses. He had measured the

string of brilliants, and divided them into two parts, the one somewhat larger than the other.

"Two-fifths and three," thought I. "My share pleases me."

But, as it seemed, my share pleased Simon as well. One of his hands held the necklace; with the other he drew a knife from his belt, and, as it were, balanced the blade against the jewels. And there crossed his face, half turned to me as he knelt, and made more threatening by the black upon the skin, a smile so evil that its import could not be mistaken.

"A rich reward for one shrewd blow," said I to myself. "Friend Simon, I'm repaid for my climb."

A dull grating sound came from below. The boat, impelled perhaps by some unguarded twitch of the painter, had drawn against the ship, and was nosing her hull far too affectionately to suit my liking. Down the pole I went; for, after all, 'twas my affair to keep open the line of retreat, no matter what Northen might be meditating or plotting. And if the boat were not instantly available, the matter of his motives might come to be of very little interest to either of us. Luckily, though, the skiff had not drifted far from the pole. My shin whacked against the gunwale as I groped with my legs for the boat, and a moment later I was back where I belonged, with one hand grasping the paddle and the other rubbing the bruise. Glancing up, however, I beheld something which made me forget my bodily mishap. The star which had been shining close to the line of the ship was blotted out by the form of a man leaning upon the rail. His head and shoulders were plainly outlined; there was in the pose a suggestion of melancholy, a longing, perhaps, for the home-coming, for the sight of some sweet maid of the fair land of France. That the fellow had been there during my descent from the port was probable. In truth, his wits must have been wool-gathering. In spite of all precautions, I had made more commotion than was to be desired; yet he gave no sign of knowledge of my presence.

I did the little there was to be done, making sure that the pistols were available in case of need, and then sat awaiting results as patiently as might be. In a moment or two the faint glow from Simon's candle disappeared. Now he should be emerging from the port. What was keeping him? Ah! what was that? A half-stifled shriek from the cabin! The star-gazer at the rail caught the alarm, starting back so that he was almost out of my range of vision. There was the patter of feet upon the deck; a sharp command rang out; then Simon swung himself through the port, and none too quickly, for so hard upon him were his pursuers that he was forced to leap to avoid their weapons. He struck the water with a tremendous splash. I had the paddle lifted for the stroke which should send the boat to his rescue so soon as he rose to the surface. He would appear near by, I calculated. But Simon had another scheme.

"This way, this way" he called, as his head emerged a score of feet from the ship. I dipped the paddle, and the boat's bow swept round; another stroke, and she gathered headway. From the Frenchman's deck came a brilliant flame, as a torch was lighted. By its glare

I saw two things: Simon's face, made grotesque by the black half washed from it, and the eyes burning with a light of passionate rage; the ship's rail high overhead lined with men, shouting and gesticulating. Another moment, and they would open fire upon us, and truly we offered a noble mark. Out came my pistol. Crack! crack! I gave 'em both barrels, aiming at the man who waved the flare. 'Twas well for us both that I had acquired the knack by practice at the bottles tossed in the air. There was a cry, but rather of surprise than pain. The torch tumbled to the water, and was extinguished with a fine spluttering. As it went out, I sprang forward, and gave Simon a helping hand. Climbing into the boat, he threw over a pair of sculls; I took to the others, and away we dashed.

"Hurt, Simon?" I asked.

"No; a clumsy fool blundered in upon me and raised a hue and cry; that's all," he answered.

"Not in time to interfere, I trust," said I.

"The jewels are safe about me," said he.

"And the man?"

"Curse him! he's still alive."

After that I saved my breath. But, as we pulled on, I felt no little wonder whether in case Simon were not at stroke—as I had taken care to have him—I should not be feeling a few inches of cold steel between my ribs before we had put the Frenchman a quarter of a mile astern.

X.

Now, inasmuch as I safely returned to England, it may have been waste of paper to allude to such suspicions of Simon. He spoke me fair enough when we regained the Southern Princess, letting the boat go adrift: how Northen had come by it was no concern of mine. And on the homeward voyage there was naught in his manner to excite distrust, save on one occasion when he and I were privately inspecting our windfall. He had brought to light rings, pins, and brooches, a very pretty show, but no string of brilliants.

"Where's the necklace?" I asked, carelessly.

"The necklace?" said he, fiercely. "Bleeding bones, man! what d'ye mean?"

"Why, Simon, the necklace," said I. "You know what I mean. If not, your memory must be failing."

"The necklace?" he repeated. "How in the devil's name—"

"Keep third parties out of it," said I. "This matter's between you and me. Your ears have not deceived you. I said 'the necklace.'"

"Oh! that bauble," said he, with a quick change of front which did his judgment credit; for he could not but realize that in some way I had learned that which he had tried to keep secret. "It escaped my recollection. Here it is."

He thrust his hand into the breast of his shirt, and produced the prize in question. At close quarters the thing was dazzling.

"Diamonds?" I asked, my voice sinking a little in spite of me.
"Yes," he answered, curtly.

I could not take my gaze from the splendor of the stones. Somewhere I had heard that in the glitter of such gems shone the eyes of men who had lost their souls for them. 'Twas easy, with those glories before me, to believe the tale. Simon brought me back to earth.

"Ha, my buck," said he, with sudden heartiness, "there's many a gay night in these pretty fellows. Eh, my lad?"

"Well, I hope so," said I, with a notion that wisdom counselled only moderate interest in the necklace. "Keep 'em safe, Simon,—at least my two-fifths of them."

"Trust me for that," he answered, and put the string back in its hiding-place.

Now, as I have explained, 'twas only in the course of this dialogue that Northen showed his teeth, so to speak. At all other times while the voyage continued—and the Southern Princess's progress was so slow that she might have had half the West Indies in tow—his mood seemed to be cheerier than in the earlier period of our acquaintance. That he had some plot in his mind I have since had little doubt, though at the moment I worried not at all over such contingencies. I took certain small precautions, to be sure; for instance, I did not climb on dark nights to unsteady perches from which a jostle might have sent me overboard; but such details were merely trifles worth heeding by anybody who looked forward to the joys of spending a considerable amount of money. And so, at last, the good ship came to her port. What with delays on the other side of the ocean, and calms and baffling breezes during the voyage, the months had vanished in surprising fashion, and the season was early spring when once more she was in the Thames.

Mr. Snow boarded her as we were warping into the docks. Busy as he was with talk with the skipper, he found opportunity to give me a word. An hour or two later, when he was quitting the ship, he took occasion to pause and call me to him.

"By the way," said he, in his quick manner, "letter for you at my office. Meant to bring it; forgot it. Come to-morrow. Glad to see you."

"Very well, sir," said I, and off he hustled. Who could be my correspondent? So far as I knew, only the vicar was acquainted with my address. "Probably," I thought, "he has sent me an invitation to visit him." The next morning, though, I got leave from Captain Graham, who was more complaisant than most men would have been: perhaps Mr. Snow had dropped a hint or two that I was to be humored. While I was preparing for the outing, Simon asked me to wait for him.

"We'll go together," said he. "'Twill be well to dispose of a few of the pretty boys, and stow the others away in a safe place."

Surely Captain Graham was an obliging fellow to permit both of us to take a run ashore. However, 'twas his business, not mine.

Simon acted as guide. Presently we came to a narrow street of

mean houses, before one of the least presentable of which he halted. A battered sign declared that the tenant was a goldsmith.

"There's an incurious buyer within," said he. "Come on, Jack. Keep your eyes open if you will, but don't talk too much."

We went into the shop. A dismal, grimy hole it seemed to me, with very little stock in sight. Up to us hobbled a wizened old man, bearded, bespectacled, and dirtier than his surroundings. He bowed to Northen with a servility unpleasant to see in one of his years.

"How much?" asked my comrade, dropping a handful of rings and brooches upon the counter. The old man picked them up one by one in his shaking fingers, held them to the light, made a test or two of the settings, and then, speaking in a thin, wheezy voice, offered five hundred pounds.

"Twenty-five hundred, you mean," said Simon, coolly; and the pair fell to haggling until, for all my interest in the bargain, I grew weary of the delay. In the end they agreed upon a price,—fifteen hundred pounds. The shopman counting out the money, Northen divided it into two piles.

"There's yours," said he, pointing to the smaller. "Tally your two-fifths."

"No need," said I, thrusting the cash into my pockets; for I detest niggardly questioning of a friend's reckoning, and, moreover, I had kept a fairly close watch upon the division. The old man eyed us keenly, but made no inquiries as to the history of the jewels.

"'Tis part of his trade," Simon explained, when I spoke of the matter after we had left the shop. "Were we anxious to prove pedigrees we'd have sought another market. He's not inquisitive, and he's got those trifles for a quarter of their value. Now for another sort of establishment, where we can put away the best uns."

We entered a public-house, above whose door swung a picture of a bull, brick-red as to hue and curled as to horn, and asked for a private room. In this retreat Simon proceeded to fill a little iron box, which he drew from a capacious pocket, with rings, brooches, pendants, pins, and I know not what devices of the goldsmith's art; diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, stones white and blue and red and green, a collection like a rainbow for beauty, but a deal more tangible. The necklace went into the box with the rest: you may imagine that I made sure of that. Simon, locking the box, gave me one of its two keys.

"Now to business," said he.

"Gladly," said I, keeping close to his shoulder as we left the place.

After walking a quarter of a mile or more, Northen turned into a court lined with buildings by no means imposing, yet with weighty respectability showing in every brick and stone.

"Take your cue from me," he whispered. "We need a straight story here. This is a fine old banking-house, as safe as the Bank of England. You take me?"

"To a nicety," said I. "But no lies, Simon, no lies."

The place in which we found ourselves was a long, low-ceiled room, almost as gloomy as the shop, but clean and furnished substantially.

Along one side, behind a high desk topped with metal lattice-work, were several clerks. Simon asking for the manager, we were conducted to a small rear room and into the presence of a dignified elderly person, full of that air of rigid probity which follows much handling of other people's money—by orthodox methods. To him Simon briefly unfolded his tale. We were honest seamen, returned from a voyage and desirous to deposit in safety certain profits of our venture, the same being contained in the iron box, which we wished to remain in the custody of the bank until such time as we should be ready to open it. Being unskilled in the methods of trade, we preferred to obtain the protection of a firm of high repute for our little savings till we had time to look about us, as it were, and learn how to guard our possessions from ravenous land-sharks.

The manager heard all this very patiently, though Simon told it in halting fashion, with many repetitions and diversions, and altogether with highly creditable art. Perhaps such deposits were of commoner occurrence than I had supposed, though probably, as a rule, they were made by persons of a different class from that to which we simple mariners appeared to belong. The outcome, at all events, was that the box was accepted, bound with stout cords, and carefully sealed in our presence. The manager entered on his books that it was the property of Simon Northen and John Holmes, and was held subject to their joint demand, to be delivered to the pair, or to one bearing a formal authorization from the other to act in his behalf, or to some third person armed with such credentials from both.

"Stay, though, mates," said I, speaking for the first time. "Let's have another knot in the line. Say me an' my chum here each puts on paper a word or two, known only to himself, and gives the paper to the skipper, him to hold 'em under seal until a call comes for the box. Then if we both turns up, well an' good: if only one comes, he must be able to write out the other's secret words: if it's a stranger, he must have both sets, or there ain't to be no delivery."

"Not a bad idea," said the manager, a little patronizingly. "By it you provide another safeguard; though our strong-boxes are fortified to protect an empire's treasures, if need be," he hastened to add. It was his benevolent notion, I dare say, that a little mystery would please us, while it was unlikely to cause him any trouble. The banker spoke so quickly that Northen had no opportunity to object, though he whipped about at my suggestion, and the glance he shot at me bore much resemblance to the unneighborly look his face had taken on while he balanced the necklace against his knife. But he uttered no protest. Indeed, almost before he realized the situation, I had picked up a pen from the manager's desk and scribbled "Jack Slayde" upon a piece of paper. Folding the slip, I gave it to the banker, who, in turn, enclosed it in another paper and attached a seal. 'Twas far from Simon's plan to begin an argument, which might lead nobody could tell whither. In a moment he had followed my example, though with no great avidity. There were other formalities to be observed, such as signing our names in a big book, taking a receipt, and the like, but presently we were again in the street.

"Whither now?" I asked, affably. "Back to the ship?"

"No, blast her!" snapped Simon, adding an oath or two. "I'm done with her."

"But—" I began.

"Call it desertion or what you blank-blank choose," he went on, gruffly. " 'Tis only the difference of a few days one way or the other. I've an affair—never mind where—that'll keep me blanked busy for a time. I'll meet you at the Red Bull—when?"

"This day month," said I.

"This day month," he repeated, and, with no other farewell, strode off. Just why he should be in such a rage at the banker's adoption of my proposal was beyond my ken, but, save for the amusement his fit of temper furnished, I thought little of the matter. I had other concerns of more pressing importance. There was money in my pocket aching to be spent. An hour or more passed very agreeably at a tailor's shop and in buying knick-knacks for Charlie's delectation delayed to that extent my arrival at Mr. Snow's counting-house. There the letter was awaiting me.

Hardly a dozen lines of it had I read, when I dropped the paper as if it had burned my fingers. 'Twas from the vicar. And at the very outset it told me that my boy had been kidnapped.

Since then I have often wondered why this news threw me into such a passion. Certainly the possibility of the thing was far from unforeseen. Circumstances had made it advisable, if not absolutely necessary, to leave Charlie at Starrow. There I had believed him to be safe, though with sufficient appreciation of the chance that he might be found by the searchers. I had had experience of the energy with which the pursuit of the lad had been carried on: I understood what diligence and skill could accomplish; my opponents could be rated as lacking in neither. Yet never in my life did wrath so completely overwhelm me as on that day. The room grew dark; the sounds from the street died out; my tongue lost its power. I could not move my limbs. It may be that this paralysis was for my good. I know that presently, when the first burst of passion was over, I was as weak and trembling as if I were just come from some series of violent physical efforts. But, little by little, my mental vision cleared, and I did that which a man of greater experience would have done long before. I picked up the letter, reading it again and again until the story it told was clear even to a partly confused brain. The boy had been carried off a week earlier. A carriage had dashed up to him while he was walking with a playmate along a lonely stretch of road, and he had been seized and borne away. The other child had brought in the news, but so frightened was he that for a long time no coherent narrative could be gleaned from what he said. Then had followed a pursuit, resultless, of course; for the good folk of the village were ill fitted to deal with the crafty men, whose retreat had been arranged with great discretion. After a little the slow hunters had lost the trail completely.

So much the vicar related, and little more, though he covered a good many pages. There was much said about patience and resigna-

tion under misfortunes, which may have soothed the vicar's feelings in writing the letter, but which had no effect of the sort upon me in reading it. Early in the twenties such appeals rasp rather than tranquillize.

Well,—to get to the thread of the story again,—after a bit I found myself regaining a fair degree of composure. Two or three clerks were observing me furtively. No doubt my fit of wrath had furnished them some amusement, a matter I might have discussed with them had time allowed. But I was anxious to be out of the office; for, like many a better man, I have always found that moving the legs seems to assist in moving the brain. So, bidding one of the fellows inform Mr. Snow that I was about to return to the Southern Princess, I left them to gossip as they pleased. The thought had presented itself to me that possibly a clue to the lad's whereabouts was as likely to be obtained in London as in Starrow. If I went to the country 'twould be to follow a scent long gone cold. In the city—well, much valuable knowledge was to be picked up by one who limited his slumbers to his hours in bed. At any rate, I would go back to the ship. There a busy day or two might serve to sharpen my wits.

This sage decision was reached while I rambled about the streets, following a general course for the docks, but taking no careful notice of the exact route. It happened, therefore, that when I came to the water-side I was a considerable distance from the vessel's mooring-place. The afternoon was waning, and I was becoming hungry. So I entered the nearest tavern, and, selecting one of the box-like stalls at the side of the eating-room, called for a substantial supper. Had I been dainty, I might have gone further, for the hostelry's looks promised poorly, nor were the patrons attractive gentry. The viands, however, served to satisfy an appetite sharpened by the sea, and met the fate they merited. The reckoning had been settled, and the waiter feed, when, as I sat considering the situation, so to say, the tide of fortune set in my direction. A man entered the place, glanced nervously about, and darted into my den. A dingy curtain partly hiding me from view, he did not make me out until he was in the seat across the table from mine. Then, with a startled exclamation, he half rose to his feet. The meeting was luckier for me than for him; for the new-comer was the man of all men I most wished to see,—my clerkly friend Mr. Hopkins, as tall and thin and gangling as ever, but none the less refreshing to my eyes.

"Sit down, Hopkins," said I. "I am pleased to meet you; highly pleased, my dear sir. Sit down, I tell you." For he was still struggling to gain his feet. I spoke very quietly, but at times soft words compel obedience, especially when there is just a jarring note of harshness to improve their quality here and there. Down he dropped, at all events, and gazed on me with pale face and quivering lips.

"Yes, I am vastly pleased," I went on, "and not the less because the pleasure was somewhat anticipated. You know, Hopkins, that I should have sought you out; and you know, too, that you have been looking for me this afternoon."

It had flashed upon me that his presence in this region beside the Thames must almost certainly be due to one cause. Charlie, no doubt,

had given his captors clues to my occupation, perhaps in the threats of my vengeance which he would surely have rained upon them. And Hopkins, playing the spy, had wandered neatly into a trap.

"I don't understand," said he, faintly, but the start he gave at my words convinced me that the guess was correct.

"You wrong yourself," said I. "Don't cry down your own virtues, my dear sir. Mock-modesty is unbecoming, Hopkins. Between old friends 'tis out of place."

"What is it you wish of me?" he asked, trying to feign a little courage. "I am not aware, sir, that there is any business between us."

"Hopkins, your memory is fickle," said I. "To strengthen it, I'll remark that I'm well acquainted with certain recent events,—for instance, the carrying off of the boy in whom you have shown such kindly interest. Here! Down with you, you cur!" For the fellow had sprung up again, and had to be brought to his senses with a round turn.

"I will not stay here to be insulted," he protested. "Let me go, or I shall cry out for help."

There was before me a stout table-knife, somewhat blunted in point and dulled in edge, but sufficiently dangerous-looking to serve to assist in keeping him in order.

"No, you will not cry out," said I, picking up the weapon. "You will be reasonable, because you are not anxious to have your throat cut,—cut from ear to ear, Hopkins. The excellent folk near us will not interfere in strangers' quarrels. So, my friend, I advise you to keep your seat and assist me in a light and possibly instructive conversation."

I waited for him to say something, but he did nothing but glare at me. So, at last, I went on :

"Be docile, and you shall not be harmed. Merely as an encouragement I'll tell you this: I cherish no great resentment for what has happened. A trick has gone against me, just as others have been in my favor. A game which goes all one way is poor sport. Why should I fret about the boy? No bodily harm will come to him."

"Indeed he is safe and well treated," Hopkins broke in, hastily.

"Precisely; you see there's no cause for us to wrangle," said I. "I've no intention even to ask you where he is. Ah, your face brightens. Well, let me add that I shall ask few questions, because I know a great deal more of this affair than you suppose it possible for me to have learned."

"You know where he is?" said he, fairly taken off his guard.

"I know what is of vastly greater value," I answered. "Your employer, the moving spirit in all these doings—let us talk of him. Now, to begin with, let me call to your attention a gentleman whom I met on the stairs of Mr. Best's house. Do you recollect the incident?"

"You knew him?" Hopkins asked, incredulously.

"Not then," said I. "But, my friend, all the world understands that servants will gossip. Now, as I left the house that day, a carriage stood before the door. On the box was a coachman. I dare say he was, or is, no more garrulous than others of his class. But you real-

ize, Hopkins, what a query or two, if backed by coin of the realm, will accomplish in such cases."

"Damn him!" groaned my *vis-à-vis*.

"Oh, no: he seemed a decent person," said I. "But come, we're drifting from our course. Dropping the matter of the lad, I'll back to the main question. The gentleman on the stairs addressed to me language to which I paid slight heed at the time, but which, on mature consideration, seems to deserve an explanation. In short, I demand from him the satisfaction due from one gentleman to another."

"What? A challenge? Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, a challenge," said I. "And, what is more, you'll carry it to him. Nay, by heaven! you shall write it. Here, waiter, pen, ink, and paper."

A man in a dirty apron brought the articles demanded and set them before me. I pushed them across the table.

"Write!" said I, sharply. "Make it formal. Give in full the names and titles of both parties."

"But I am ignorant—" he began.

"Not too ignorant," said I. "Make it clear that I demand an abject apology. And, Hopkins,—here I ran my thumb suggestively along the edge of the honest old knife,—"don't let errors creep in. Should I find even a word misspelled, I might do that which would be unpleasant to remember. Note this: I'm prepared to deal with treachery. Write!"

"Your name, sir?" he asked: "which shall it be?"

"Slayde,—John Slayde, lately of Boston in Massachusetts, but now of London," I answered. "The name of the other party need not be spoken aloud. To work, man, to work!"

His pen crawled over the paper until the sheet was a third filled with his neat clerkly characters. Even when his task was finished he was slow in submitting the challenge for inspection. I had almost to tear it from his hands. And such a challenge! I would that I had preserved this product of the Hopkins authorship, but it was lost years ago, and, though I can laugh yet at the recollection of its general absurdities, the phraseology is not to be recalled. What impressed me at the time was the line "Godfrey Harding, of Southview House." After my eye caught these words I read no farther—at that time.

"I've changed my intention," said I, rising from the table. "I'll not burden you with the dangerous duty of delivering this missive. That part of the business can be seen to later on. And now, Mr. Hopkins, I have the honor to wish you a very good evening."

XI.

A gentle slope with thickets abundant at the top but lessening in number and size as the land falls until near the foot of the declivity the turf shows free from them; then a stone wall as high as a man's head where it is still intact, but so ruinous in places as to be sur-

mountable without difficulty ; beyond the barrier a stretch of rising ground, once laid out as a lawn, but now as neglected as the wall ; on the crest of the knoll a fine old dwelling, weather-beaten and out of repair in spots, yet comfortable, and home-like, and good to look upon.

Such was the picture Southview House and its surroundings presented for inspection as I lay in the edge of a wood on the summit of the low hill without the wall. The hour was late afternoon, the day nearly three weeks from that on which I had forgathered so joyously with Mr. Hopkins. The interval had not been wasted. Though I had remained at my post aboard ship until the last bale was hoisted from the hold of the *Southern Princess*, a trusty agent had been at work in my behalf. A shrewd Londoner, sent down by Mr. Snow, to whom I had confided certain of my perplexities, and who had displayed an active interest in the endeavor to overcome them, had looked over the field, and had brought a report on which I was acting. It had seemed wise, all things considered, to keep myself in the back-ground, so to speak, partly because thereby Hopkins and his employer, learning that I remained by the ship,—they doubtless had me under surveillance,—would underestimate my desire to recover the boy ; and also because each day which passed without move against them would serve to lessen their vigilance. At last, though, I was on the scene, having departed from London secretly and in disguise. In truth, though I had no desire for foppishness,—save, perhaps, on suitable occasion,—my raiment now was hardly to my taste ; for no vagabond stroller was more tattered and dirty. My cheek had not felt razor for a week, and by my own feelings I was as bearded as a pard,—though a stranger, for all that, might have noted little difference in my appearance on that score. Altogether I was such a figure as decent folk shun,—which, for the time, was the very effect I desired to bring about.

The agent had gleaned several facts of importance. First, Charlie was as good as a prisoner, sleeping by night in a room the window of which was barred like a cell, and restricted by day to exercise within the wall, with a burly ruffian always at his heels. Second, the place was garrisoned, a watch being kept with military regularity, if not with soldierly thoroughness. Third, Hopkins and his master Harding were much from home, coming and going frequently, sometimes in company and sometimes singly. The precautions taken were greatly to my fancy ; for they proved that the enemy had decided to make a stand, and I foresaw no great difficulty in circumventing them. To be sure, the grass had not grown under my feet since I left London, news of which move could hardly have yet reached Harding and his helpers. On the whole, therefore, my spirits rose high, as from the hill I watched the house and such of its people as were in view.

Charlie was not in sight ; indeed, he was mostly held within-doors at that hour of the day. Near the front of the mansion a pair of hulking bullies loitered, moving about only so much as was necessary to keep their blood circulating freely ; for with the approach of the sun to the horizon the breeze had sharpened its edge, and, blowing as it did from over the stretch of salt water on the other side of the house

(the building stood within two hundred yards of a little bay, which in turn gave upon the Channel), it bore a chilling dampness, against which great-coats would have been none too complete protection. I gave the twain some heed, but far more was directed to the movements of a ragged urchin who was strolling across the lawn but keeping well in toward the wall, as if in dread of the men on guard. To all appearances, this lad was the most commonplace of youthful trespassers, bound on no particular errand, and venturing on forbidden territory for no better reason than an inborn liking for defying authority. Such, at least, seemed to be the opinion of the men, for they honored him with hardly a glance. If they noted that he was dragging something over the turf, they thought nothing of it. To me, however, the circumstance was most noteworthy, inasmuch as upon it depended the success of a very interesting venture.

The boy came presently to a break in the wall, and, climbing through it, disappeared. After a little I rose from the ground, and, keeping in the shadow of the trees, began to walk first in a direction almost parallel to that which he had taken, and afterward on a line which brought me nearer and nearer to his path. From the wood I passed to a field, in a hollow, out of the range of vision of anybody in the house. On the farther side of the field grew a thick hedge, in which a single narrow gap appeared. Through this gate-way I stepped, to find myself at one end of a log thrown as a bridge across a brook, which just below the crossing widened into a circular pool about ten yards in diameter. With the hedge on one hand and a clump of low trees on the other, the little sheet of water was dark, but not too dark for me to observe the urchin perched on the opposite bank. To him I crossed, and sat beside him.

"You laid a good plain trail, I hope," said I,—"one the dogs can't miss. Let's see the drag."

Up from the pool he pulled a piece of fresh meat, which had been dangling in the water at the end of a yard or two of twine.

"Fine an' bluggy, master," said he, with an unctuous grin at the gory lump.

"Let's see," said I; "there'll be four of 'em, turned loose at sunset: that'll be in a very few minutes. You're not likely to be sorry for 'em, son?"

The grin went out of his face as he pulled up one leg of his trousers and pointed to a deep wound but partly healed. 'Twas that wound, received at the jaws of one of Harding's dogs, which had led to the boy's acquaintance first with my agent and then with myself. The former, in fact, had been the youngster's rescuer from worse harm from the brute, and the lad, an idle, ne'er-do-well, poaching, vagabond scion of an unknown stock, had repaid his good offices with slavish gratitude. I had found the lad that morning at the nearest village ('twas three miles away), and, having enlisted his services, had set him at the congenial task of laying the train to the mine which I had devised as the easiest method of disposing of the dogs. There would be no pangs of repentance in him with that sore reminder in his flesh. So eager was he for the business in hand that he had found me a club, heavy,

but well balanced. I picked it up, and struck once or twice at air to get the swing of it.

"Twill serve," said I; "and even if they come too thick, I've a pistol ready. Will you stay to see the fun?"

For answer he whipped out a knife and drove it viciously into the ground, as if the dirt had been a canine throat.

"If you get the chance," said I. "With good use of the club, though, the curs will not need steel. Ha! what's that? The dogs are loosed early this evening."

The baying of a hound came clearly to our ears. In a moment we had both gained our feet and were crossing the bridge. When I took my stand at the end of it and somewhat to one side, my left arm brushed the hedge, so narrow was the ledge on that bank of the stream. My ally crouched facing me, with the log between us.

Nearer and nearer came the dogs, louder and louder grew the baying. A stone displaced as they clambered over the wall fell with a crash. We heard them crossing the field in hot cry. Then something dark shot through the gap in the hedge.

Down came the club. A single whine, and the brute toppled from the bridge and splashed into the brook. The lad's knife was dripping.

But there was time to note no more. Again the opening was darkened, again the club descended, again the knife was plied. Our practice was improving, for the dog, a big mongrel, I judged him, was despatched almost without noise other than the crunching of the skull under the weight of my weapon.

Then came the third, a bull-dog full of fight and hard to kill. My arm may have lost its cunning, for, though the club was wielded with all my strength, the brute was but partly disabled. Instead of falling into the stream, he staggered, and then, before I could strike a second blow, sprang at the boy, who, losing his balance, rolled down the bank with the dog's teeth fastened in his left arm. At that instant the last of the four bounded through the hedge, a pretty, graceful little animal, that it seemed a sin to harm. But his doom was sealed; a tenor bark or a bass might be equally dangerous to my projects. One blow was enough. The creature dropped with a pitiful little moan, and sobbed out its life at my feet.

I leaped down the bank in search of the boy and his foe, but my services were not required. Their fight was over. The knife had won, and the dog lay dead at the water's edge. The urchin was panting from his fright and his exertions, but his arm had suffered less than I had feared might be the case. 'Twas not a bite to be joked at, but 'twas by no means so serious as had been the wound on his leg. I gave him the praise he deserved, but briefly; for there was still business to be done before the light failed altogether. The carcasses were to be concealed, lest, in alarm at the disappearance of the dogs, some of Harding's retainers should decide to investigate their vanishing. It was my hope, however, that the servants would suppose that the animals were merely out for a run, and attempt no inquiry; and I was not to be disappointed. But the lad and I, nevertheless, being ignorant

of what was to happen, carried the bodies to a deep but narrow inlet a furlong or so farther from the house, and there dropped them into the water with big stones tied to their necks. The task was one I was glad to have completed.

"Well, youngster," said I, "you and I know a gentleman who'll have to restock his kennel, eh? How's the arm feeling?"

"Yah!" he cried, with a shrill laugh, "he'll ne'er bite again, master! I cut his heart out, I cut his heart out, I cut——"

"Very true, my son, very true," said I, hastily; for the lad was like to fall to chanting his victory, and, as all men understand, a poet or song-maker is wofully slow in completing a statement of facts. "That bull-dog will never try to dine off you again. But, if you're ready, I'd be pleased to be guided to the old roost atop the hill."

As he led the way from the inlet, I took such notice of its characteristics as the fading light permitted. It was narrow, as has been said; its banks were steep and fringed with trees. A boat might lie there very cosily and secretly. So much I reflected, and then, not having any notion of a retreat by sea, transferred attention from the little estuary to the rough path we were travelling. The boy made great headway. Presently we were over the bridge and through the break in the hedge; next the field was behind us, and the hill before us; and at last we were back under the boughs which had furnished shelter an hour before.

"Get to the horse," said I, for a hired steed was picketed in a dell on the other side of the wood. "In half an hour, as nearly as you can guess it, lead him to the road. If you hear pistol-shots, ride toward the great gate yonder. Otherwise bide my coming."

The youngster, whose fancy was tickled mightily by this night-work, slipped away on his part of the undertaking, and I devoted myself to mine. Lights glowed in several of the windows of the big house, but the one I was anxious to see had not yet appeared behind the bars of Charlie's room. They had a habit of sending the child early to bed, doubtless for the sake of feeling relieved of his care; for once between a locked door and a gridironed window they thought him safe enough. After that ceremony the guards had a fashion of passing an hour or so in the kitchen before taking up their watch for the night. So much the agent and our youthful ally had communicated, adding that the vigilance of the rascals, once they left the solace of pipes and ale, was keen and unrelenting. Please the powers, though, I meant them to stand sentry over an empty cage that night.

Charlie's chamber, it should be explained, was on the second floor of a wing projecting toward the hill. Whether the adjoining rooms were occupied was hard to determine. Probably they were at times, though the centre of the household life seemed to be in the opposite wing. The barred window was not far from the ground, a dozen or fifteen feet at the most. Yet that small distance was somewhat of a factor in the problem.

Half an hour after the evening had set in, a light gleamed behind the bars. My time for action had arrived. I took from its hiding-place under some leaves a coil of rope, strong without much weight,

and passed it over one shoulder. Then, tightening the belt which bound my ragged jacket, I strode down the slope, climbed the wall, and advanced cautiously across the turf. The absence of the dogs appeared to have caused no alarm; not a soul was stirring outside the house. I circled about the wing until I reached the rear of the main building. A big, wide-branching oak grew there, and I crept along, as carefully as might be, until the trunk sheltered me from chance observation. The kitchen door was not far away; in fact, a few more yards would have pleased me vastly. The voices of the men in the room could be distinguished, though the door was closed. They seemed to be arguing: I prayed the debate might be long and hot.

I had studied that tree attentively in the course of the afternoon; for it was likely to be a noble helper in the enterprise. Big as it was, it had not looked difficult to climb, and the event proved that it did not belie its looks. In three minutes I was well above the ground. Before me was a limb stretching directly above the roof. Getting astraddle of the bough, I wriggled along it, halting only once to gaze down at the party grouped in the kitchen, several of whom were visible through an uncurtained window. Three men were to be seen, one a groom, as I judged from his dress, the others sturdy, broad-shouldered fellows out of livery.

"I'll bet sixpence," thought I, "that that pair have lively recollections of a midnight fight at the Haven. 'Tis a pity their faces don't show a trifle more plainly."

My leisure, though, had its limits. On I went, without delaying to inspect the twain as deliberately as I could have wished, and, after a little, the roof was beneath me. To it I dropped, and lay there for a moment or two. Then, crawling up to the ridge and groping along for a few feet, I came to the wing in which Charlie slept. So far, all had gone excellently, albeit gathering clouds made the night darker than was conducive to rapid progress over unfamiliar ground. I was moving toward a chimney-stack which promised to be useful, when my knee struck sharply against an obstruction. 'Twas the frame of a trap-door, in the middle of which was set a stout iron ring, no doubt for convenience in raising or replacing the hatch. A strong pull at the ring failed to budge the door by a fraction of an inch. The resistance was as good as a spoken hint.

"Luck is kind," I reflected. "The rope might catch or fray on the bricks, but 'twill run smoothly over this iron."

I freed my shoulder from the coil, passed an end of the cord through the ring, and slipped a loop about my hips. Then, easing up a little on the other part of the line, I slid slowly to the edge of the roof. The barred window was but a few feet below. There was a pale glimmer in the room, the source of which was beyond my ken; but there were no sounds to indicate that the occupant was stirring. Very gingerly I let myself swing in the air. I paid out the line as a spendthrift parts with his pennies; a yard, then another, then a foot, and I was looking through the window. And this is what was to be seen: a small room, a bed in a farther corner, a few odds and ends of furniture, and on the floor a candle set in a basin and burning behind

a sieve-like guard of wire. The window-sash was opened a few inches for the sake of air. Very speedily after these observations my foot was on the ledge and my hands were clasping the iron bars.

I tapped on the glass, once, twice, thrice. There was a movement of the bedclothes; a small head came into view, a pair of wide-opened eyes shone like stars in the faint glow of the candle. I feared lest a small mouth might be opening too.

"Charlie," I called, as loudly as I dared. "Charlie, don't cry out. 'Tis I,—Uncle Jack."

"Twas gladdening to one's heart to see the spring with which the white-robed little figure was out of bed. Bending down, I caught the hand he thrust between the bars, and gripped it till the lad winced with pain.

"I knew that you'd come, sir," he said; "but it has seemed a long, long time. But how—"

"Oh," said I, anticipating his query, "I've come to you from overhead: that's the direction our friends didn't keep an eye on. What's more to the point, I mean to take you away with me. If there's a bolt on the door, push it into the socket. Then dress yourself. But be careful; no noise, remember."

He crossed to the door, and there followed the grating sound of metal against metal. In another moment he was back beside the window with his garments in his arms. While he clad himself, I set to work with a small, fine-tempered saw, brought along for just this emergency and warranted by its London maker to eat through iron as a poorer tool might sever wood. I had made tests of its worth, and was confident that in half an hour an opening could be made through which the slender boy might squeeze himself. But the bars were stout. Though I toiled steadily, progress was not satisfactory. Besides, the creaking of the saw was louder than was desirable, in spite of the grease with which the blade was daubed.

"They've treated you kindly, Charlie?" I asked, pausing to wipe the sweat from my forehead. "No whippings, eh? no abuse?"

"Oh, it didn't hurt much," he answered, evasively. "And Andrews—she's the housekeeper—is very nice to me. She lets me have the candle to go to sleep by. You see, sir, there's nobody but me in this part of the house so early in the evening."

"Good!" said I. "But, Charlie, who was it carried you off? A tall, thin man they call Hopkins?"

"Yes, sir; but who told you, Uncle Jack?"

"Never mind just now. Was there with him a Mr. Harding? And what is he to you, anyway?"

"Mr. Harding calls himself my uncle. He wasn't with Hopkins. This is his house, you know, but he is away a good deal."

"Is he here now?"

"No, sir."

I was for setting to work again, but Charlie stopped me with a question about the dogs.

"Did you charm them?" he asked. "Two of them are terribly fierce, sir."

"They're charmed, my lad," said I. "They'll not inconvenience us."

"Oh, how jolly!" he exclaimed. "Peggy has a fit if they come near her."

"Peggy?" I repeated. "Peggy? What's she to do with this?"

"Why, she's here," he answered. "Didn't you know that, sir?"

"No, I didn't," said I. "Why on earth is she in these parts? She didn't pursue you, did she? Gad! but some of these females are worse than bloodhounds."

"I don't understand you, sir," said he. "She was here before I came. So was her sister. Mr. Harding is their—their—guardian; that's the word, isn't it, uncle?"

"Sometimes," said I.

"And they're both so unhappy," he went on. "Miss Marian has got to marry a man she hates,—Mr. Harding will make her do it, and he forbids her to write to the vicar,—and she's crying her eyes out half the time. And that makes Peggy cry, too, and—well, then I don't have a good time, Uncle Jack."

"Naturally you don't," said I. "This man Harding must be a wretch: he'll be called to account some day. After you're safe and sound we'll see if something can't be done for the girls."

"But they must go with us," said he, quickly. "I told them that when you came for me you'd take them too. They're depending upon you, sir."

"What?" I exclaimed. "Say that over again."

"I promised that you'd take them too."

"You promised?"

"On my honor as a gentleman," said he, as grandly as you please.

"Well, Charlie," said I, very quietly,—for 'twould never do to let him imagine me confounded by his announcement, and, moreover, I was tiring of sawing at the tough metal,—"your news alters the situation. Where's the girls' room?"

"On the other side of the house," said he.

"In that case, we can hardly bring them here," said I. "Nor could they pass through the window unless half the bars were removed. Of course, as you've given your word, you'll have to stand by it,—which means that I shall have to leave you to-night and come back better prepared for the business. Keep up your courage, lad; it may be a fortnight, it may be more, but I'll abduct the three of you. And I may as well be off at once, Charlie. Take some dirt and tallow and fill in this cut in the bar. Say nothing of my visit; don't ask questions about the dogs; warn the young ladies to keep their own counsel. Now give me your hand, boy. Good-by, Charlie, good-by, for a little while."

"Good-by, Uncle Jack," he answered. "Don't worry about me. And Peggy will be so happy!"

I swung from the ledge, and lowered myself rapidly to the ground, throwing off the loop as soon as I gained a foothold, and pulling the cord swiftly through the ring. The end of the line came rattling down so noisily that I shrank against the foundations of the building.

The precaution was not ill advised ; for in a moment or two a man rounded the corner of the house and halted within a score of feet of me. He peered about suspiciously, but the darkness saved me from discovery. After whistling in vain for the dogs, and cursing them for their disappearance, he went away grumbling. No sooner was the coast clear than, gathering up the line, I started for the rendezvous with my helper. And in half an hour more, the urchin having been paid off and bound to secrecy, I was riding toward London, letting the horse pick his way, and devoting my attention to the complications resulting from the reappearance of the Misses Grant.

XII.

To a person of great shrewdness the obstacles to be conquered would doubtless have seemed trifling ; but I confess to puzzling over them for a long time before reaching a decision even as to a plan of campaign. Indeed, the project was but vaguely outlined when on the day appointed I sat me down in the Red Bull Inn to wait for Simon Northen. Of all men he was as likely as any to prove a useful companion or counsellor. I might have carried my new troubles to Mr. Snow, to be sure, but there was small chance that he could have assisted me ; for no sooner would the merchant have learned that Harding was the guardian of the Misses Grant than his dread of the law would have been aroused, and after that his courage, even as an adviser, would have vanished. So I pinned my faith upon Simon, and got such cheer as was to be had from a pot of ale.

He appeared at last, and, nodding carelessly, led the way to the little room in which we had packed the jewels in the iron box. A very different-looking man was he from the worthy who had been present on that occasion. Now he was dressed soberly, but almost richly, and his whole manner had changed to that of a prosperous, steady-going citizen. His face was not easily adapted to such a rôle, yet he had contrived to do much in spite of his limitations. What manner of thing he had been about to make the masquerade desirable was beyond my imagination ; however, the matter was no concern of mine.

“Simon,” said I, when we had passed the time of day, “what do you propose to do with the precious stones ? Sell them, I suppose ; but when ?”

“All in due time,” said he, carelessly.

“What are they worth ?”

He gave me a quick glance, but made no answer. I repeated the question.

“Sold in what way ?” said he. “At forced sale, or held for a fair market ?”

“In due time,” said I, quoting his own words.

“Five thousand pounds, more or less : say five,” he answered, after a moment’s thought.

"Then would you like to earn half my share of 'em,—say a thousand pounds?"

"How?" He put the question gruffly, as if suspicious of some trickery.

"For your ears alone——"

"Exactly: I'm no gossiping parrot." He smiled, showing a line of strong, discolored teeth.

"Let us suppose a case," said I. "The first supposition is that three children are held in practical captivity. The second is that there is a gentleman desirous of rescuing them."

"Go on."

"In this supposititious case there are difficulties to be met. The children are kept under the guard of two or three bruisers, besides the ordinary house-servants and grooms. The house itself is strong enough to stand a siege."

"On the coast or inland?"

"It overlooks the Channel."

"A boat might be of advantage."

"In this supposed case it would be. To carry them off overland would require carriages, and would make pursuit easy. The girls——"

"Girls?" said he, sharply. "How old are these children?" He put needless stress on the last word.

"There is a boy half grown. One girl is a little younger than he, the other is—um—um—perhaps seventeen."

Simon laughed in my face.

"Come, come, man," said I, testily, "you're off the course. A pledge has been given by another, which I am in honor bound to make good. For no other reason are the girls included."

"All in this supposed case?" said he, with a grin.

"We can drop that fiction," said I, by no means pleased with his levity.

"Come to the point, Jack," said he. "What is it you want me to do?"

"To find me a suitable craft, to join in whatever operations may be necessary to secure the custody of the three, and to assist in carrying them to a safe retreat."

"There'll be fighting?"

"Possibly,—yes, probably. If you hesitate——"

"Blast me! you've no cause to call me a coward," he rapped out, fiercely.

"For that reason I seek your coöperation," said I.

"Well, what else?" said he, somewhat mollified.

"Merely this: the girls, to the best of my knowledge, are wards of their oppressor. He has, I think, no legal claim to the boy."

"Wards?" he repeated, thoughtfully. "Then you'll have to escort them out of the country."

"Why not to France or the Lowlands?"

"All for a thousand pounds! The bid's too low, Jack Holmes." He leaned back in his chair as he spoke, and eyed me keenly.

"Then," said I, desperately, "suppose I offer my share of the jewels, less a thousand pounds to be paid by you upon their sale?"

"Ah, Jack, you suspect my figures," said he, the grin coming back to his face.

"The market may improve," said I, dryly.

"True; but if it does not, what then?"

"Simon, I stood by you faithfully," said I. "Now I beg you to stand by me. Do you refuse?"

"No, by God, no!" he cried, with an earnestness I grieve to confess I laid rather to a calculation of the jewels' value than to the promptings of a proud spirit. "Jack, I accept your terms. Quit beating about the bush, and tell plainly what's in the wind. Here's my hand on the bargain, and death to me if I betray you!"

And thus Simon Northen and I formed our second alliance.

"Twas late when we parted that night, he to busy himself on the morrow with securing a suitable craft, and I to make a few preparations for the matter in hand. Up to a certain point our project was clearly mapped out, Simon falling in with the notion that we could do no better than to move to the neighborhood of Harding's stronghold as soon as possible and lurk about it in readiness to seize the first opportunity for a raid. The inlet, where the bodies of the dogs had been disposed of, took his fancy. Unless my description was at fault, the boat, he said, could lie snugly in the shelter of the high banks for a day or two. If its presence there attracted notice, another berth would have to be found; but, all things considered, we had best make trial of what appeared to be a providentially convenient harbor. Once on the scene, our movements must depend largely upon circumstances.

When we met again, Simon reported that he had obtained a vessel which would serve, and early the next day the pair of us went down the river to inspect her. A boatman rowed us through a swarm of small craft, in the off-shore fringe of which lay a sloop, painted black, with "Medusa" picked out in white letters on her stern. Northen nodded significantly as the boat drew close to her. In a moment we were alongside, and in another we were on her deck. Whatever her merits might be, there was something awry in her appearance. There was dirt in plenty on the deck, tangles of rope showed where neat coils should have been, and here and there the paint had blistered off in big patches. Overhead things were in better shape, and even a landsman could guess that she would show a great spread of canvas for her tonnage. For all the world she reminded me of a comely slattern carrying her head high and letting her stockings drag about her heels.

"She's small," said I, dubiously; for such slight experience as I had had afloat had been in ships, and the Medusa seemed but a cockleshell even for sheltered waters.

"And so much the less likely to set inquisitive folk to prying into our affairs," Simon rejoined.

"Is she fast?"

"She has the legs of any king's cutter. A smart sloop of war would overhaul her in a blow, but you'll not be looking for naval gentry, I take it. Come below."

H. H.

The cabin was a box of a place, yet less cramped than might have been supposed. The finishings were good, though there was no trace of frippery or ornamentation. A bunk on each side, a table which could be lowered when not in use, and a bench across the forward end, caught my eye. The head-room permitted one to stand almost erect.

"Well?" said Simon, interrogatively.

"Shelter for the passengers, at any rate," said I. "What's in the bow?"

"Room enough for two men," said he; and when we had gone on deck, and were peering into a black hole forward, I took his word for its capacity.

"What's the verdict?" asked Simon, seeing that I made no move to investigate the region under the hatch.

"Favorable, I suppose," I answered; for the very fact that he had selected the *Medusa* was enough for me. "By the way, though, what's this craft's trade?"

"I promised to find a boat, not a history," said he, sharply.

"Right," said I, by no means surprised at the answer. "What she has been doesn't matter. What she will be is the point. How soon can she be fitted out?"

"We'll drop down the river to-night: what say you?"

"The sooner the better."

He gave a gruff grunt of approval, and hailed the shore-boat, which had drifted some distance away. Neither of us spoke while the waterman was putting us ashore, but, once the fellow had been paid off and dismissed, Simon bade me fetch from the city such belongings as I cared to take on the cruise. Following this counsel diligently, and having some of my preparations completed, as has just been said, I was able to return early in the evening. Simon was awaiting me on board the sloop.

"All ready?" I asked, as he hoisted my bag to the deck.

"Ay, ay," he answered, in sailor fashion, and to prove it sprang forward to a baby windlass by which the anchor was got up. The main-sail had been hoisted against my coming. By the time I had set my bag in a corner of the cabin and was again on deck, the little craft was in motion, with Simon hauling away at the main-sheet and the sloop gaining headway swiftly as the canvas caught the steady, favoring breeze. A little later he set the jib, trusting me with the tiller for the time. When he rejoined me the lights on shore were dropping astern at a merry rate.

"She's a flier, Simon," said I.

"With wind and tide to help her, no wonder," he answered. "But you're not far wrong, Jack. The girls have got her in tow, I'll allow." And he laughed in a sarcastic way which I did not fancy.

"Come, belay all that," said I, quickly. "Have this clear in your noddle from the outset: the young ladies are to be assisted simply because of a gentleman's word given and accepted, and for no philandering nor other reason. D'ye understand?"

"So you've remarked," said he, coolly.

"Then so you may believe," I cried, with some heat; for truth lies close to the corner-stone of honor.

"Oh, of course," said he, dryly. "But I'll serve notice on you, Jack, in my turn. There's a fair bargain between us. We both know its terms. In the end you deliver to me an order for your share of you know what, along with the secret words; and when I dispose of the pretty boys, you get a thousand pounds. What in earth or hell do I care what you do with the birds you take from this Harding's cage? I'll stick to the contract."

"Well, Simon, I ask no more," said I, and after that was content to watch the sloop's sails as she drove ahead on her course.

XIII.

About eleven o'clock of a clear bright morning Simon Northen and I stood on the bank of the inlet, looking down at the *Medusa* as she lay snugly in the narrow harbor, which had such depth that she floated safely within a few feet of the shore. We had put her there at day-break, backing her into the berth with a pair of sweeps, so that now her bow pointed out to sea in the direction in which we hoped soon to see her travelling. If any one had observed the manœuvre we had no knowledge of the fact, and now we had little fear of early detection; for 'twould have required a keen eye to pick out the slender mast among the trees, and the hull was invisible at a distance of a dozen yards. There were no boats in the offing, so that there appeared to be no risk from that quarter. It had been a slow run to our port, the days slipping away in light breezes or calms, but there had been no mishap, Northen displaying a surprising acquaintance with the intricacies of Channel navigation. Indeed, from the ease with which he had found the inlet by my not too accurate directions, I might have supposed his knowledge of the coast to be that of a native. But were he such, he made no mention of the fact.

I must admit that at this particular time my schemes were still in embryo. *Southview House* was within a quarter of a mile, but so far I had not been able to decide on a method of reaching its captives. There was always, to be sure, the chance offered by a bold attack; but at the best 'twould be a last resort. Even allowing Simon and myself to be equal to the task of besting five of the defenders (who if taken unawares would doubtless make a poor resistance), we could hardly count upon defeating more; and with grooms and hired ruffians I believed the household to muster a greater number of men. Harding himself would make a stout opponent in any case, one likely to demand for a little the full attention of either of us. No; plainly simple force was not to be relied upon until all other efforts had failed.

In any event, though, it behooved me to have a look at the house. It was with this in mind that I had left the sloop when the morning was well advanced, and climbed to the higher ground, Simon following close behind. Both of us had visited the summit of the slope after

making the inlet, but soon had returned to the *Medusa* for a few hours' much needed sleep. The place was as lonely as before, with no sign or sound to indicate that there were men anywhere within leagues.

"If you're so inclined," said I to my companion, "we will go on a little sight-seeing tour. There can come no harm to the sloop."

"Lead the way," he answered, and off we marched to the pool and the bridge where the dogs had died, across the field of which I have spoken, and by a *détour* to the wooded hill. Not a human being nor a four-legged creature did we spy, till the observatory had been gained, and we were gazing out on the old house and its grounds.

"The cage?" queried Simon, settling down beside me.

"The same," said I; and for a space neither of us spoke. Long and eagerly I gazed upon the building and the stretches of turf about it. A laborer was digging a trench near the gate, and a man, one of the guards, no doubt, lounged near by. His presence was reassuring in a measure, for it went to prove that Harding had not removed the children to some other hiding-place. For a time, though, ocular and direct evidence of their presence was lacking, and my mind was a deal easier when Miss Peggy and Charlie came running through the great door. They darted toward the pair at the gate, but the sentinel waved them back, and—reluctantly enough, I warrant—they obeyed. As they turned toward the house, Miss Marian Grant appeared. She moved with little life or animation, it seemed to me,—though the distance played havoc with accuracy of observation,—and the younger ones may have caught her mood; for they followed her very soberly when she walked slowly toward a settee under the shade of a small elm.

"The birds?" asked Simon at my elbow.

"Yes," I responded, somewhat absently.

"A quick rush might work wonders," he went on. "There's only one fellow there who'd offer resistance."

As if in answer to his suggestion, three men emerged from the house.

"The devil!" I cried. "Yet I might have looked to find him here."

"Who? Harding?" demanded Simon.

"No. Watch the tall, thin one. That's a villain whose neck I hope to wring some day."

"Ah! such necks twist to a charm," said Simon, softly.

"His will, I'll wager," said I. "Look! he's going up to Miss Grant. He seems to be aping politeness; he has doffed his hat. Good! she has sent him about his business. . . . Now he's back with his hirelings. What's he here for? I'd supposed him to be in London, keeping watch on me."

"Harding's chief mate, eh?" asked Simon.

"Exactly."

"Then maybe he's been called to navigate the ship while the skipper's away."

"Maybe you've hit it," I cried. "By the Eternal, I hope you have. If you're right—"

"Look!" growled Northen, cutting short my speech of jubilation.

One of the subordinates, stepping back to the door, had produced a musket, which he was offering for Hopkins's inspection. For an instant it seemed certain that we had been discovered. Then I saw that no present use of the weapon was intended; for the man carried it back to its place. Still, the pantomime had put another aspect on the proposal for a charge. Presently, too, Miss Grant called the younger pair from their play, and led them into the house.

"What's your opinion, Simon?" said I.

"Nothing to be done just now," he answered. "Bar everything else, we need more breeze than is blowing. There'll be more by night, or I'm a Dutchman," he added, with a weather-wise squint at the sky.

"Then there's no reason why I shouldn't try to pick up a bit of information this afternoon," said I. "There's a village two or three miles over yonder, where I'm unknown save to one shrewd lad, who, no doubt, can tell me something of value. A road which curves round this hill runs close to that gate, and then, bending sharply to the right, goes on to the hamlet. You can see the white line of it. 'Tis my route. I'll be back by five or six o'clock at the latest. There's a thicket beside the road not far from the gate, where a quiet gentleman can meditate in peace. If fate should will——"

"I'll be there," said he, with one of his wolfish grins, which might have prejudiced a narrow-minded stranger against him.

Leaving him without further ado, I walked through the wood to the road, taking care, however, to keep out of sight of the men about Southview House. Once free from that danger, I strolled along in no pressing hurry, there being two or three topics I desired to consider. Yet I must own that I was little the wiser for my cogitation, and on reaching the village entered its single street more convinced than before that chance must be relied upon. The lad of whom I was in search could hardly be said to have a home, but slept in various cottages or out-buildings, according as the charity of the owners was hot or cold. Hence the task of finding him was by no means trifling, and after a little I began to despair of success; for 'twould have been unwise to ask many questions. The loafers at the single public house which was the nerve-centre of the little community might supply information to a visitor, and thither I resorted, selecting a seat near a window commanding a view of the street, and calling for a mug of ale to serve as excuse for killing an hour or more. The inn was very old, and seemingly less prosperous than in bygone days; for the tap-room was of a size out of proportion to its present patronage. The history of the whole village might have been surmised from this example of fallen fortunes. It was called Hardingfield, in honor of the family of my opponent, having taken the name, I dare say, in days when the proprietors of the great house held far wider estates than had descended to the reigning squire. The fortunes of the family and of the village must have declined together.

Two or three aged rustics in the tap-room ogled me with dull curiosity, and then took their attention back to their beer. A share of their talk reached my ears, but from it nothing was to be gleaned.

After an hour or so of this profitless business, I made a second tour of the village, but again without avail. No wonder, then, that when I once more sought the tavern I was far from satisfied with the wasting of the day. I took my former post, renewing my devotions to the landlord's brew and speculating in an ill temper on the obstacles which beset me. Onerous as the waiting was, I was in no mind to abandon it too soon, and by the help of several mugs contrived to while away most of the afternoon. Once I drew the landlord into conversation, but he proved either to know little about the doings at Southview House or to be cunning in keeping to himself such knowledge as he had. In truth, I was fairly baffled, when there came a new personage upon the scene.

A stranger, riding up to the inn, tossed his bridle to a stable-boy and came storming into the tap-room, calling loudly for a bottle of wine, and mingling more oaths with his order than good taste required. He was a man of middle height, but very heavy about the shoulders, with a thick muscular neck, topped by a bullet-head. His face was unprepossessing, broad and red. He had small, deep-set eyes, and a hard and cruel mouth. He moved with a great swagger, more that of a bully than of a ruffling gentleman, though his dress was costly and in the extreme of the mode. Who he might be I knew not, nor did the matter concern me greatly; but at once I made up my mind that, were I not otherwise engaged, 'twould have been my Christian duty to cut the comb of such a crowing cock of the walk.

Very soon the new-comer made it plain that the offensive manner with which he had entered was the sort which he maintained toward those he deemed his inferiors. Even after he had been served, he rained his curses upon the landlord, who shrank away in a very poor-spirited fashion. Thereupon my gentleman jumped up from his seat and began to stride about the room, talking so vociferously that not only did he cow the feeble gaffers into abject silence, but also brought a dozen or more able-bodied villagers to the door, outside of which they clustered, looking and listening, but making no attempt to interfere, though he fell to cursing them as well as the old men in the tap-room. Altogether 'twas a shameful scene of ruffianism and timidity, which galled me to observe, though so far the stranger had given me no direct cause to interfere. Of a sudden, though, he whipped about, and strode up to my table.

"And you, damn you!" he cried, "who may you be? What mean you by staring at me? You're no better than these other clods."

"Tut, tut!" said I, stifling the anger naturally aroused by his classing me with the rustics. "Go away, man, go away. You've not even the excuse of gentlemanly drunkenness. You weary me."

At that his rage, however caused, fairly overflowed. He rained upon me epithets and curses in a stream which seemed to have no end. For a time I sat silent, but at the twentieth or thirtieth insult—the exact number does not matter—temper got the upper hand. His weight was fully three stone above mine: so, instead of striking him, I sprang like a cat at his throat. Back he reeled, his fists flying wildly in his efforts to beat me off. But my grip was good, and I clung to

him, though more than once his blows made my head ring, sinking my fingers deeper and deeper into his thick neck. He was not cursing now. His breath was coming in gasps; the veins of his face were swelling as if they would burst. Through the door we went, struggling out upon the green, his strength failing fast. His blows became feeble taps, then his arms dropped, and when I let him fall he lay upon the ground as senseless as a stone.

None of the by-standers had attempted to interfere. Now that the fight was over, they stood in a ring about the fallen man, talking among themselves and eying me in a very friendly manner. I asked several of them who my adversary was, but they were ignorant of his identity. While the matter was being discussed, a horseman rode up, and, jumping from his saddle, pushed through the villagers.

“Sir James Ransley?” said he, putting his inquiry in a very civil tone, and touching his hat.

“Well, what is it?” said I, feeling justified in receiving a message intended probably for the bully who had put me to such trouble.

“Mr. Harding’s compliments, sir, but he has been detained upon the road, and will not be here for two hours.”

“Anything else?”

“You are either to wait, Sir James, or go on to the house, as you prefer, sir.”

“You’re not long in Mr. Harding’s service?”

“Only a fortnight, sir.”

The messenger was a boyish-looking, round-faced young fellow, with more of the house-servant than groom in his appearance. His horse gave evidence that he had ridden fast. Probably his master would not make better time over the road, in which case the two hours’ lead of the servant would not be reduced. Two hours! Much might be accomplished in two hours.

“Ride on,” said I, pulling down my cuffs and smoothing my neck-cloth, which had been somewhat disarranged. And at the same time I was blessing the luck which had led me to attire myself that day in garments befitting my station in life. “I shall wait here,” I added, “at least for a little while.”

He touched his hat, mounted his nag, and rode off in the direction of Southview House. At the same moment the man on the ground gave signs of returning consciousness.

“By Jove, my fine fellow,” thought I, “you’re to be Harding’s guest, eh? I wonder—gad! if you be Miss Marian’s suitor, no wonder she’s icily coy. On the chance, I’ll try to put you where you’ll do no harm.”

“Will your honor make a complaint against this pusson?” asked an officious-looking man among the spectators, who, now that the dispute was ended, was bustling about with an air of great importance.

“Are you a constable?” I asked.

“Yes, sir, I stand for the king’s laws,” said he, tapping his chest mighty proudly.

“Your duty is plain,” said I, sternly. “Lock this wretch up. There are a dozen witnesses to his outrageous conduct. If you have

no jail, put him anywhere—where he can't escape. And, I warn you, constable, he has a foul tongue. If he tries to speak, gag him. He looks a cutthroat: you'd best lash his hands and feet to make sure of him."

The officer of the law needed no second bidding. In a trice he had bound the helpless man's hands behind his back, and with the help of three villagers was bearing him to the inn stable, which, it appeared, was the handiest substitute for a prison.

"Make sure of him," I repeated. "Pay no attention to what he may say." For 'twas likely that the gentleman, so soon as he got his voice, would raise as loud an outcry as his lately compressed vocal organs might permit. Between wrath at his incarceration in a common barn and the pain in his neck, which promised to be considerable, my haughty acquaintance would be fairly beside himself.

"Come, lads," said I to the rustics, who were still watching me with a flattering respect upon their countenances, "we'll drink to the laws and their proper enforcement."

They followed me into the tap-room, quite ready to drink that toast or any other. But when the mugs had been emptied I caught sight of the clock above the bar. The last hour had galloped away unheeded. I left the good folk rather abruptly, and set out at a round pace for my rendezvous with Simon. Twilight had come, though, before I reached the thicket. A soft whistle brought an answering signal, and Northen crawled out from behind a clump of bushes.

"You're late, blasted late!" said he, grumpily.

"The time has been well spent," said I. "Simon, the odds are with us, but we've got to act quickly. Harding is not at home, but will be in about an hour."

"Well?"

"Two guards should be somewhere between the gate and the house—"

"They are there: I saw 'em not five minutes back."

"If we could lure them out and put them out of the way—"

"As easy as winning with marked cards."

"Go on!" I cried.

But Simon preferred deeds to words. Springing into the ditch beside the road, he ran toward the gate, the curve of the highway protecting him from observation, even had the sentinels been keenly alert. He halted for a moment behind the stout stone post from which the gate swung, and then glided like a shadow across to the other, into which it locked when closed. By way of the ditch I followed him, perceiving as I drew nearer that he had stretched a cord between the posts and about a foot from the ground.

"Jump on your man when he falls," Simon whispered, the sounds barely reaching me across the space that separated us. "Ready?"

"Yes," said I, marvelling what stratagem he was about to practise.

A shrill cry, for all the world the shriek of a woman in dire pain or danger, rang in my ears, once dying out in a long wail, and then repeated, higher, shriller, wilder than before. I could have sworn that no woman was near us, yet here was this outcry raised almost at my

elbow. So startling was it that I pulled a pistol from my pocket, and was for hurrying to the rescue without much thought of the enterprise in which I was then engaged. My innate chivalry, indeed, might have brought about a serious blunder (as even the best motives sometimes do, when Fate is prankish), had not Simon hissed out a warning and brought me back to my senses.

"Bones and blood! keep behind the post, man," he urged. "You're daft to leave it."

"But the woman?"

Northen raised his hand to his throat, and again the cry rose upon the air. How he managed the trick so cleverly I know not; a wonderful imitation it was, in truth, and one which deceived others than myself. For, when the third wail ceased, we heard the sounds of men running at speed from the house. Crouched for a spring, one on either side of the gate-way, we awaited our enemies. Nearer they came, and nearer still: now they were almost in the trap and advancing with undiminished haste; now the leader's foot had caught on the rope and he was pitching headlong. He struck the earth heavily, and I was upon him like a flash. But he was in no need of my attentions. The fall must have stunned him; for he lay motionless and silent. Nor did his companion fare better, though he had slackened his pace a little when the leader tripped, and his fall was somewhat less severe. He had time to utter a groan; then Simon's fingers were laced about his throat, and he was as quiet as his mate.

"These beauties are the hired bullies," said I, peering first at my man and then at Simon's. "But they'll not earn their pay this night."

"Truss and gag 'em," Northen counselled. "I'll attend to them."

"Then I'll on to the house," said I. "If you hear me whistle, make all sail to join me at once."

"Ay, ay," he answered, whipping a cord from his pocket and setting to work to bind the ruffian under his knee.

I stepped over the rope between the posts, and marched straight up the driveway. Nobody was stirring without the house, showing that the outside force had been thoroughly disposed of, but at the open door stood a fellow, his form made plain by the lights in the hall. No doubt he was speculating over the mystery of the shrieks and of the silence which had followed them. I had a pistol ready for use as a persuader, but, getting closer to him, saw that he was the messenger.

"Sir James," said he, bowing and scraping as I climbed the steps and advanced into the circle of light.

"Ah! my man," said I, profiting by his blunder, "I decided not to await your master at the village."

"Beg pardon, Sir James, but did you see a woman——?"

"Nothing much: if a man cares to beat his own wife, who's to say him nay? There was some slight disturbance outside the gate just now, but that's all over. My good fellow,"—here I tossed him a coin, accompanying the gift with a wink, perhaps below the dignity of a true baronet,—"my good fellow, I desire to see Miss Grant at once. And bid the little girl and the boy—there is a boy here, I've been told—come with her."

Leading me into the hall, he departed on his errand. While it was doing I looked about with some curiosity, but there had been time to observe little more than some old oak panelling and a suit of armor when a door opened and a young woman came into view. She swept me a fine, haughty courtesy; then, drawing herself up to her full height, looked coldly at me.

"Miss Grant?" I cried, springing toward her.

"Mr. Holmes! You here?" The frown vanished from her face, and in its place was a look of intense amazement. "The servant announced—"

"In another's place, but on my own mission," I broke in, with scant politeness. "I am here, Miss Grant, to redeem Charlie's promise. Kindly prepare for an immediate departure."

The answer she began was cut short by Miss Peggy and Charlie, who rushed upon me, each hugging one of my hands and raising a childish shout of joy.

"I knew you'd come, Uncle Jack!" cried the boy. "I told you so, Peggy, didn't I? oh, dozens of times."

'Twas a pretty scene, and I grieved to cut it short. But the servant had returned, and was watching us with an expression akin to suspicion. Maybe my reception accorded ill with the reputation borne by Sir James.

"Well, sirrah, what is it?" I asked, sharply.

"Beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Hopkins is in his room, sir. If you wish, sir—"

"Tell him to stay there till I send for him," I answered. The man departed obediently enough, but no sooner was he gone than it occurred to me that a blunder had been made in giving him an opportunity to communicate with Harding's lieutenant. Besides, it was highly probable that some other servant, who knew Sir James, would stumble in upon us and raise an alarm.

"We must go at once," said I. "Where are your hats and cloaks? If they're not at hand you must start without 'em: we can fit you out in some fashion aboard the sloop."

Charlie and Peggy hurried into the room from which Miss Grant had appeared, and were back in a moment equipped for venturing out of doors. Indeed, as the boy told me afterward, they had managed to make preparations for a hasty departure, being full of faith in my ability to effect a rescue.

"And you, Miss Grant?" I cried. "Are you ready?"

Before she could speak, Simon stood in the door-way.

"Come on, Jack!" he blurted out. "Horsemen are riding fast this way. I heard the hoofs, and posted in to warn ye."

"Take the children, Simon," I directed. "Peggy and Charlie, go with this gentleman. Quick! Go, I tell you!" For the pair had shrunk back at sight of his fierce eyes. It was the girl who, escaping her sister's outstretched hand, showed the boy the route, but the lad was close behind her. Simon caught each by an arm, and hurried them out of the house.

"Now, Miss Grant," said I. "Every moment is precious."

Snatching up a cloak, which had been tossed carelessly upon a chair, I took her hand, and half dragged her to the door, where she freed herself, and, much to my surprise, halted abruptly.

"Don't delay, I beg you," I pleaded. "You can hear the horses coming. They'll be at the gate in a moment. And on one of them is Mr. Harding, and on another, I'll warrant, Sir James Ransley."

At sound of her obnoxious suitor's name—my guess on this point had been correct—she caught at her skirt as if she were about to dart away in full flight. Looking up at her (for I had descended a couple of steps), it seemed that I had never beheld a sweeter picture than she made, poised thus, as it were, and with the lights of the hall throwing their radiance on her graceful figure. The year which had passed since our last meeting had wrought its changes in her. She had been a pretty girl; now she was a beautiful woman. But when seconds were likely to prove so valuable, I could spare few of them even for delightful visions.

"Come, Miss Grant," I repeated, altogether puzzled by her hesitancy. "Our boat is awaiting us: everything is arranged."

"Heaven protect me!" she cried; "what shall I do? What is this mad thing you ask?"

"What?" I demanded. "Is your consent not given to this flight?"

"No, no, Mr. Holmes! There has been a terrible mistake. The children talked of your coming, but I never dreamed that this could happen. And now Peggy has been carried off! My God! my God! what a fearful, fearful blunder!"

XIV.

Here was a pretty pickle, a complication with a vengeance! A mistake and a blunder? Yes, beyond peradventure she was right. But, the error having crept in, how was it to be remedied? For what the children had done, their elders must suffer. To bear off a young woman against her will is a poor business for a gentleman to engage in, yet my choice threatened to lie between that and risking a pitched battle through an attempt to recall Simon and return Peggy to her sister. The horsemen would speedily be upon us. A great bell began to ring loudly, as if in proof that the household had caught the alarm. Matters were hastening to a climax.

"Miss Grant," said I, earnestly, "I regret the mistake most sincerely: I can say no more. But, sorry as I am to press it upon you, you must choose, and choose instantly. I pledge you every courtesy, if you come with me; for your choice lies between freedom and Peggy, and captivity—and Sir James Ransley."

The plea had been better than I knew. With a cry of "Peggy! Peggy!" she sprang down the steps. I caught her hand, and together we ran toward the breach in the wall giving upon the field. A crash and yells from the gate told that somebody had come to grief. Perhaps

Simon, being possessed of much foresight, had left the rope in place. Near the stables, which were on the seaward side of the house, lanterns were moving about as the grooms gathered in answer to the summons of the bell, which still clanged angrily. From an upper window of the mansion somebody was shouting to us to stop, a command so idiotic and so lacking in humor that, had I not feared to alarm the lady, a bullet would have travelled in his direction. As for Miss Grant, now that the die was cast, she bore herself nobly. She ran well—for a woman; so well, indeed, that when I helped her over the wall we had a clear lead on the pursuers, among whom I made out one mounted man and several on foot, some of whom bore lanterns. They were a howling, vociferous pack, but it struck me that the footmen were in no wild haste to overtake us. Simon and his charges were scrambling through the gap in the hedge on the other side of the field.

I caught the girl in my arms as she swung down from the wall, and aided her more than before as we hurried after our leaders; for she was panting from the unusual exertion, and her strength might fail all too quickly. The clamor of the men ceased for a bit as the fellows scaled the wall, but 'twas resumed as soon as they settled into their stride again. They gained upon us in the field, and I saw that a stand would have to be made. As I pushed my companion through the opening in the hedge, Simon picked her up and fairly bore her across the bridge. He had permitted us to overtake him, perhaps with the notion that his abilities as a fighter would be needed to cover the retreat. But a better project had suggested itself.

"On to the boat, Simon!" I exclaimed. "Here's where I block 'em. Off with you!"

"Use your pistols, Jack," he answered; "they're your best card. No in-fighting, lad."

I heard him bid the children and Miss Grant make such haste as they could, and was mightily pleased that the young woman obeyed without demur. Had she attempted to turn back and to take Peggy with her, grave complications might have resulted. The younger girl would have struggled, Charlie would surely have refused to desert his sweetheart, and Simon very likely would have essayed to improve the situation by carrying Miss Grant to the boat, under the impression that that would be the simplest method to end the difficulty. And a very little confusion might have entailed the capture of our whole party, with probably a wholesale bloodletting, in which stray bullets might have shown their disregard of sex. Therefore it was with easier mind that, seeing the retreat of the others continued, I dropped the cloak I had brought from the house, and stepped into the gap in the hedge, shouting a loud challenge to Harding's men to come on at their peril. Hardly had I done this when there was a sharp report. A bullet whistled a dozen feet overhead. So they had begun to burn powder! Well, after all, there was comfort in knowing that they were the aggressors. The man who had fired was not in the front rank; nay, he must have been one of the last of the party to enter the field. The flash of his pistol showed that he was very near the stone wall. Long as the range was, a shot might have been risked profitably in his

neighborhood, had not another claimed prior attention. A fellow either more courageous or more foolhardy than his mates was twenty yards or more in the lead of them, and, running steadily and swiftly, was getting closer to the hedge than was good for my health. Accordingly I threw up a pistol and blazed away, aiming to take him just above the knee, and succeeding in the attempt, I judged; for down he went in a heap, and did not rise after his tumble.

This incident instantly changed the whole aspect of the affair. One or two of the others dropped, as if through sympathy for their comrade, another turned and fled,—as the movements of the lantern he carried evidenced,—and the rest pulled up like horses sharply reined in. They were none too keen for a fight in the dark, and for the moment they lacked a commander.

“Halt, you curs, halt!” I shouted. “I’ll shoot down the first who stirs foot. If you want to die, come on; if you care to live, stay where you are.”

There could be no doubt as to their preference. In sooth, had there been only the vanguard to deal with, the matter would have been concluded then and there. But just as I was regretting that the young lady was not a spectator, and speculating whether she would ever get an accurate idea of the event, a man joined the irresolute half-dozen. His voice, raised in ordering and encouraging them, had a reminiscent sound to my ears.

“The gentleman of the stairs,” said I to myself; then called out,—

“Mr. Harding, I warn you too. Advance, and I fire.”

“Surrender, you villain, surrender!” was the answer he sent me. “I know you. By God, sir, all England shall be too small to save you, after this night’s work.”

“Softly, softly, my worthy friend,” said I. “The score I have to settle with you is too long to need additions. At some future time and—”

Bang! A pistol-shot put a close to the debate, the bullet striking the earth so close to me that the dirt spouted against my leg. The flash was some distance to the right of Harding, proving that the man who fired had almost succeeded in effecting a flank movement under cover of the darkness. I answered the compliment, but with what success it was impossible to tell, and then stepped back from my exposed position, letting the hedge serve as a partial protection, but not retiring too far to keep an eye upon the enemy. While I reloaded my weapon Harding consulted with one or two of those nearest him. There was little likelihood that he would risk a rush, but it was probable that he would endeavor to surround me. The hedge, no doubt, could be passed on either hand, and if he could put two or three men behind me there would be a fine chance that the *Medusa* would be forced to sail with a short crew. But while the fort had been held, Simon must have been making great progress toward the sloop.

One more shot, fired at random and principally for moral effect, and I retreated silently across the bridge and down the rough path which led to the inlet. Dark as the field had been, ’twas well lit compared with the windings of the way yet to be traversed. So I made

haste slowly, as the saying is ; for a fall over a root or a stone might have proved a most serious accident. Nearly a third of the distance to the boat had been covered, when a chorus of shouts in the rear announced the discovery of the ruse. Now the pursuers would be after me, of course, but they could not be certain of my whereabouts, and the best they could do would be to scatter somewhat. Most of them, to be sure, would follow the path, but with the chance of an ambush at any of its angles they might not gain upon me. Thus I reflected, while I jogged along, at the same time wondering a little how Northen had fared with his charges. How far would loathing for Sir James Ransley overcome the young lady's dread of so strange an adventure as lay before her ? Women, though, were freakish creatures ; 'twas in no man's power to foretell what might happen.

The sounds of the pursuit were growing clearer. There was a crashing of the bushes on the quarter : perhaps some of the enemy, guessing my destination, had taken a short cut. Once I caught a fall, but luckily not a bad one, and in an instant was up again and running harder than before. Still the hounds gained on the hare. When I made the top of the steep slope to the water, several men were almost at my heels. Whipping about to give them one shot, which cooled their ardor for the moment, I dashed down the bank, running the gauntlet of a smart fusillade before reaching the sloop. Four or five fellows, who must have been hard upon me, let fly at once, but none of the missiles told. Before they could deliver another volley, Simon had opened up from the boat, and under cover of his fire I scrambled aboard.

"All safe?" I gasped, for my wind was somewhat short.

"All safe below," he answered, springing forward. "Here, lend a hand, Jack."

He had seized a rope, and as I added my strength to his the craft began to move ; for we were hauling away at a stout line at the other end of which was the anchor, gripping the bottom well outside the inlet. Harding's men raised a yell of rage, and charged down the bank. A bullet hit the mast, another whizzed close to our heads.

"Get aft, and drive 'em off!" cried Simon.

With my second pistol in hand I bounded toward the stern, just in the nick of time to see three men making at full speed for the boat—aboard which they could have leaped with ease—and to give them both barrels right in their faces. And as I fired, so did one of them. Something seared the top of my head, as a hot iron might. I was knocked down ; a faintness came over me and paralyzed my limbs. Of the assailants, one was on the ground and very still ; another was staggering back with his hands to his face. The third, apparently unscathed, jumped wildly, striking the deck on all-fours, but recovering his feet right smartly.

"Simon!" I called, or tried to call ; for I am by no means sure that sound came from my lips. The boarder gave me one glance, and, supposing me out of the game (as indeed I was), turned to attack Northen. 'Twas a choice of the sort few men are privileged to make twice. Simon dropped the rope, there was a brief struggle, and the

stranger went down under a blow which bade fair to end his earthly troubles. Northen, letting him lie where he fell, resumed his interrupted task. The sloop glided on with no further attack. I saw the stern slip by the danger point, then the shore-line itself grew dim. A deal heartened by all this, I tried to sit up, and after a little succeeded. The spell was passing from me. I was fingering the wound on my head, and rejoicing that it seemed to be not very serious, when Simon made his way aft, and took the tiller.

"'Tis all right, Jack," said he, "mud-hook up and jib hoisted. How d'y'e feel?"

"A bit squeamish," I contrived to answer. "Nothing that matters, though. Did you have any—any—trouble with our passengers?"

"No. They were good children." He put his old stress on the last word.

"Demmit!" said I, crossly, "that's barred."

Bang! Bang! Some of the party on shore were again firing upon us.

"Muskets now," said Simon, coolly. "They'll have brought up their reserves. There's another fellow letting go at us."

"I don't hear bullets sing," said I. "Are we out of range?"

"Yes," he answered, after a long look at the shadowy outlines of the land. "There goes another, though."

"And still another," said I, after a pause of a minute or so. "What's the scheme?"

But Simon was forward, tugging at the halyards, nor did he answer the query until the main-sail was spread. Meanwhile the firing continued at short intervals. "Maybe temper, maybe signals, blast 'em!" said he, taking the tiller again. "There's nothing in sight; but we'll be as shy as a Protestant at a wake. Meanwhile, why don't you bring your babes on deck, Jack?"

"First, though, how about the fellow you treated?" I asked. "Let's have a look at him."

I found the man restored to consciousness, but still lying on the planks. Even in the darkness there was something familiar in the figure. Kneeling beside him, I made a closer inspection of his face, and confirmed the suspicion as to his identity. The involuntary passenger on the *Medusa* was my highly esteemed acquaintance Mr. Hopkins.

"Heave him overboard," Simon advised.

"No, he has things to tell," said I. "When a bottle's full is no time to toss it away. Under the forehatch is a fine cellar for such wines." And after some trouble I got the fellow on his feet and forced him to descend into the black hole. Not a protest nor an entreaty fell from his lips, nor did he even relieve his feelings by swearing to himself, when the hatch had been so nearly closed as to prevent his escape. In truth, I did not envy him his meditations. I had no pity for him, though. He deserved none, unless perhaps for the unexpected gallantry he had displayed in boarding the sloop, an act, by the way, which I could never quite reconcile with the fellow's character.

Mr. Hopkins's case was soon banished from attention by the appear-

ance of the three passengers, whom Simon had bidden emerge from their seclusion. What a quarter of an hour Miss Peggy and Charlie and I had together! what tales of incidents of the fight they had to tell! what questions to ask about the fight at the hedge and again at the shore! How many had been killed? The bloodthirsty little wretches! I almost lost caste with them by confessing that I could not say with certainty that anybody was dead. In sober earnest, however, I suppose that the excitement of the evening had made them for the hour very different from their normal selves. And if they had caught the fever of battle, was I to blame them?

"Mr. Holmes, may I have a word with you?" asked Miss Grant, when after a time the children had transferred their attention to Simon Northen. She had hardly spoken while the pair were chattering at my side.

"Assuredly," said I; and, surmising that she had something which she wished no one else to hear, I descended to the cabin and lighted the lamp which swung from the ceiling. "Now, Miss Grant, I am at your service."

She had followed me from the deck, and stood just within the low door-way. When the lamp flamed up, she gave a little cry.

"You're wounded, Mr. Holmes. Your face is covered with blood."

"Nothing fatal," said I. "Except that the sight distresses you, it doesn't matter. Pray be seated. If you please, I should be glad to listen to what you have to say."

XV.

It often has occurred to me, in recalling this interview, that could a stranger have looked in upon us he would have been vastly puzzled by the scene in the little cabin. On one side, seated on a locker, was a handsome girl, very pale, attired in an evening gown of some light-hued material, torn and stained in places where briars had taken tribute as she fled through them in the darkness. Her hair, too, had been loosened, and now and then she was forced to put back the perverse locks about her forehead with swift, graceful movements of her slender hands. Facing her was a young man with a broad red furrow parting his hair, his face black with powder where the skin was not smeared with blood from his wound, and his coat slashed and ripped almost to rags. And upon the pair and the rough fittings of the tiny cabin fell the flickering light of a lamp swinging to the motions of the craft, now increasing perceptibly as the Medusa drew farther from the land.

Miss Grant's task was perhaps harder than she had expected it to be; for there was a pause, which continued until I felt constrained to assist her.

"You have something to tell, or, it may be, to ask?" said I, encouragingly.

"Yes, Mr. Holmes," she said, fixing her eyes on mine: "what do you propose to do with us?"

"What is your preference?"

"I hardly know. This has all been so—so—"

"Informal," I suggested.

"That is a mild word," she went on, with the ghost of a smile; but instantly she was seriousness itself. "What can we hope for? Oh, sir, my position is pitiable."

"But not altogether hopeless," said I, bluntly. "You are free from Sir James Ransley's attentions."

"And for that I thank you from the bottom of my heart!" she cried, with a spirit that charmed me. "But please understand me: though I detest the man, I should have refused to leave the house, had it not been for Peggy. I followed her, hoping to overtake her before it was too late. I could not be parted from her. Afterward the excitement, the pistol-shots, the—oh, sir, I was not conscious of what I did."

"Yet now that 'tis done," said I, "let us trust that it has been done for the best. For you to go back to Southview House would be to risk the renewal of Sir James's attentions. I may not have bagged him."

"Oh!" and she shrank back from me.

"No," said I, regretfully, "the best intentions fail sometimes. Once the shooting began, I meant to drop him. Still, unless he was one of those who charged us at the last, I'm afraid he got away unharmed."

Now, to my amazement, her face brightened at this. So, all at sea, so to speak, I added, "But I'll have him yet, Miss Grant. I'll very gladly undertake to rid you of him."

"No, no!" she cried, hastily. "I entreat you, sir, to let the matter go no further."

"Well, then, you shall be out of it," said I, still more puzzled. "I've a grudge of my own that will serve. And now for your affairs: have you no relatives who would receive you?"

"None, except the Fieldings. And they could do nothing if Mr. Harding ordered them to give me up. He is my guardian."

"And a kinsman?"

"Yes; a cousin."

"Cousin or no cousin, Harding means Ransley again," said I, meditatively.

"My decision is settled," she said, with sudden energy. "I will not return to Mr. Harding."

"Good!" said I. "In that case, however, you cannot be safe on British soil. To speak frankly, Miss Grant, your decision pleases me. To put you ashore at an English port would be a mighty risky piece of business for my friend Northen and myself. Yet, if you should so desire, we should be bound to attempt it."

"No, no," she said, half to herself, I think: "I cannot turn back now."

"Our notion is to make a small port in France, with which Northen is acquainted," said I. "And, 'pon my soul, I believe you could not do better than to put yourself out of your guardian's reach. Once of age, you can snap your fingers at him."

"It seems my only course," said she, with a sigh, which set me to thinking; for at first it was beyond my power to discover why a girl should have even faint regrets at escaping a hateful suitor. But, glancing up, I caught a look in her eye which gave me a hint of her perplexity.

"I'll wager what you like," said I, "that you've a very unflattering opinion of me. Somebody has made you suspicious so far as I am concerned. It couldn't have been Charlie; you wouldn't have put much faith in Harding's lies. Tell me, was it not the Fieldings? I doubt if they ever really understood me. Don't hesitate to speak out. It has been my fate to be misjudged. I've kinsfolk in America who persist in fostering prejudices of which I am the object. Come, what did the Fieldings tell you?"

"I shall not answer that," said she, quickly.

"Very well," said I; "perhaps they meant no great harm. Nevertheless they have placed me in an unpleasant predicament. Charges of which I am ignorant rest upon me. I hope to prove to you, Miss Grant, that I am a gentleman; yet my only estimable quality of which you can be aware is some slight skill in the use of the pistol. And, the more's the pity, you were unable even to see me in action."

"I believe you are very brave," said she, kindly.

"Thank you," said I; "'twill be a beginning. But I shall aim to add to the list. And now, Miss Grant, I give you a pledge. Your welfare shall be my first concern; so long as we may be together, you shall receive from me, and from Northen, precisely the same treatment I should ask for a sister of mine, had I one, and were she placed in your position."

"I thank you! I thank you!" she cried, rising and offering me her hand. But something made me open my campaign for a reputation by an act of rudeness.

"If you please," said I, "we'll postpone that until I have proved my right to your esteem."

Before she could answer, I was out of the cabin and again on deck. Bidding the children go below, I washed my wound after a fashion, and perched myself near Simon, whose taciturnity permitted me to meditate at length on the manner in which my old indifference to others' opinions had been broken by this slip of a girl. The matter had not been elucidated when Northen interrupted his silence long enough to advise me to wrap a cloak about me and get some sleep. Ten minutes later I had passed beyond recollection of the day's incidents or perception of the hardness of the deck.

Day had broken when I awoke, a dull heavy morning, with sky beclouded, the breeze which had lasted through the night still blowing, but with no great weight, and a sullen oily look on the green water. Truth to tell, 'twas not a merry moment when I threw off the cloak, heavy with dampness, and struggled to my feet. There was a dull throbbing in my head, my limbs were stiff, and something like rheumatic pains lurked in elbows and knees. Simon, seemingly none the worse for his long watch, gave me a gruff good-morning as I took his place at the tiller.

"Keep her as she is," said he. "There's nothing in sight to bother us. Call me in two hours."

"Nobody in pursuit?"

"No. And we're a good fifty mile on our road."

He rolled himself up in the cloak, and in no time was snoring loudly. My duties were of the lightest, for the Medusa steered easily, in such a wind and sea. The hours went stupidly enough, let me assure you, and when Charlie crawled on deck he received a warm welcome. We had much to talk over, though little of it is worth recording here. Reunions, indeed, being seldom so interesting to others as to the participants, I may be pardoned for dismissing this one with a reference, especially as from all the lad's talk it was impossible to gain much light on the mystery of Harding's long search for him, except such as was to be had from the claim of relationship involved in the orders given the boy to call his captor uncle. After a good many futile efforts to question Charlie further, it occurred to me that the prisoner Hopkins should be able to furnish complete information. I bade Charlie go below and inform Miss Grant that something, to be called by courtesy breakfast, would be served in the course of an hour or so, unless she preferred to have the meal postponed, a contingency well within the possibilities; for the boy had said that, waking once or twice in the night, he had heard her tossing restlessly on her rude couch. Then I aroused Simon.

"Two hours?" he asked, sitting up, and rubbing his eyes as if they needed encouragement in the matter of opening.

"Full," I answered.

"All's well?"

"Yes; as well as possible on such a beastly day. I wouldn't have bothered you, had it not been for the gentleman in the black hole. We've got to decide what to do with him."

"Well?" and he jerked his thumb significantly toward the side.

"No, hardly. I want a word or two with him, to begin with. Take the helm, and I'll fetch him on deck."

I went forward, by no means the more comfortable for Simon's ugly suggestion. Yet there was in it a degree of sense. Hopkins knew too much. I began to wish that he had never set foot on the Medusa. But, in view of the fact of his presence on board, there was nothing to do but to make the best of it.

"You below there?" said I, opening the hatch. "Come up, and let's have a crack with you."

A face pale and haggard and with bloodshot eyes appeared in the opening. Hopkins was in very bad case. I had to help him to the deck, and once there he would have fallen had not I caught his arm.

"Thirsty?" I asked. He made no answer, but greedily drained the cup I filled from a little cask lashed to the low rail. He offered no resistance when I pushed him aft.

"This person is possessed of valuable information, Simon," said I. "In your presence I call upon him to explain the reason of Mr. Harding's repeated attempts to kidnap the boy, and of his own persistent

connection with them. Make a clean breast of it, Hopkins. Tell the whole story, man, or—the consequences may be disagreeable."

The fellow glared at me, as you may see a wild beast glare from a cage, but not a word said he.

"Hopkins," said I, very softly, "you must speak."

"Or drown," growled Northen.

"The story from the beginning," I went on.

The man's face might have been of stone, so set was its expression of stubbornness.

"Again I ask you to speak," said I.

"Take the tiller, Jack," said Simon, shortly. In another instant he had looped a rope about Hopkins's body.

"Open your mouth, or over you go!" Northen hissed in the prisoner's ear. "No? Bloody bones! then have it!"

There was so short-lived a struggle that it was ended before I could interfere, then a loud splash, and the fellow was towing astern, making wild efforts to clutch the rope, and taking salt water aboard at a great rate.

"He'll drown!" I cried. "In with him, Simon! in with him!"

"Ay, ay." And between us Hopkins was speedily dragged back to the deck, where he lay, a miserable figure, gasping heavily and half suffocated. After a little, Simon forced him to a sitting position, with his back against the rail.

"Now, curse you, talk," he commanded. "Don't pretend bravery. You're afraid to die, you cur, and we know it as well as you do. Take your choice: answer questions, or over you go again."

Northen had judged his man. Hopkins's mulishness had been washed out of him. At first in short, broken phrases, then in more coherent sentences, he went through his narrative.

A tale world-old in its beginning, and to be repeated again and again so long as youth woes and maid is won; a tale of Cupid's picking the locks on which parents depend. Annette Harding, finding her family unalterably hostile to Francis Brotherton, thought to mend matters by an elopement, thereby proving that she was singularly ignorant of the family's chief characteristic. She was never forgiven. Even the news of the birth of her son brought her no kindly message; though, as later events showed, the tidings caused a great stir at Southview House. Brotherton, after striving in vain to overcome the difficulties of life in the old country, sought Fortune's favors beyond seas, taking his wife and child with him; but even in America his lot was one of privation and disappointment. After two years a fever carried him off, and, his wife surviving him but a few months, the child passed to the care of a distant relative, the Aunt Lucia dear to Charlie's remembrance, an elderly gentlewoman, who loved the lad as dearly as if he had been her own son. For a year or more all went well with her. Then came from Godfrey Harding a formal demand for the surrender of his nephew. The demand was refused, and to strengthen her position the good woman took steps legally to adopt the boy. A contest in the American courts resulted in her favor, and she believed her enemy defeated.

But Harding was too strong-minded a man to be balked by any owl of a transatlantic judge. He had sworn an oath to have his nephew, and, as a gentleman, he meant to carry out his vow. Opposition merely stiffened his backbone. So, after a considerable delay, a trusted agent was despatched to kidnap the youngster, and almost succeeded in the task, failing, in fact, by the narrowest of margins and through a combination of circumstances which could not have been foreseen. A second attempt was spoiled by another freak of chance, but it roused Charlie's protector to the need of matching craft with craft. If the lad disappeared, Harding would search for him in the States. Therefore she shipped the little chap to England, consigning him to the care of Mr. Elijah Best, who was agent for folk in America in many matters other than those of commerce. Being a person of extreme caution, Mr. Best took great pains to keep secret his connection with the feud. One of his men escorted Charlie to the hill-farm, and when at last Harding got on the trail another was ordered to transfer the lad to Dame Martha's abode, where, as has been explained, I chanced to be secluded. But the pursuit was hot, and Harding had obtained an inkling of the factor's connivance. He paid a visit to the old man. There was a heated discussion. Within an hour after Harding's departure Mr. Best was stricken. Such was the state of affairs when I returned to London to add to Hopkins's perplexities and to teach Godfrey Harding the law of the road as applied to stairways.

The clerk put off his irascible visitor that afternoon, though when the spy he had ordered to follow me returned with more bruises than information, he determined, in case his employer failed to recover, to ally himself with the enemy, whose legal claim to the boy he overestimated. And on Mr. Best's death he did so, entering Harding's service for the express purpose of finding Charlie and me. Throughout the months we dwelt at Starrow he searched resultlessly, our little precautions in quitting the city having been entirely successful in their object. Not until I called at the house which Mr. Best had occupied did he secure a clue. The same youth who had tried to follow me before (and who had passed into the employ of the new tenant, with a special retainer to keep an eye open for my reappearance) was this time more efficient. Hopkins, learning the direction I had taken in leaving the city, hastened to Portsmouth, where, of course, his labors were fruitless. From that town he went to others along the coast, a turn of Fate's wheel permitting him to stumble upon us at the Haven. Yet victory was snatched from his grasp, and though by diligent inquiry he learned of our visit to the Sword and Gun Inn, there he again lost the scent. Nor was it until remarks let fall by the Misses Grant after their return to their guardian's roof aroused Harding's suspicions as to the identity of the boy they had met in the course of their stay at the Fieldings', that the chase grew hot. Investigation confirmed the suspicions. Harding and the vicar were unfriendly, though the girls were permitted to visit the latter. A formal demand for the lad would surely involve delay. Once more Hopkins went a kidnapping, and a little later was possessed of information enough to be able

to hunt for me upon the appearance of the Southern Princess in the Thames.

Our encounter was not on the cards. It disconcerted him, and my subsequent doings puzzled both the ex-clerk and his master: so much I may say without undue pride. In spite of their surveillance over my movements, the pair learned nothing of the first visit to Southview House, nor did they succeed in accounting for the disappearance of the dogs, which, in fact, were supposed to have wandered away. Harding, too, believed the house to be safely garrisoned by his bullies and grooms. In his absence Hopkins was often in charge of the premises, and while he did not share in the other's confidence he was caught napping. This he confessed freely enough.

Harding, he added, had rescued his friend Ransley from confinement in the inn stable, the villagers having proudly led their squire to gaze on the prisoner. Of what was then said and done he was ignorant, but very speedily the two gentlemen were spurring for Southview House. The rope at the gate threw Harding's horse, but the rider was not badly hurt by his fall, and mounted Ransley's steed, which had unseated the baronet by shying violently at one of the ruffians Simon had happened to leave in the middle of the road. Harding, who perforce left his borrowed mount at the wall, overtook his disconcerted men when I made a stand at the hedge, and while he was striving to rouse their courage Ransley and Hopkins came on the ground. The former it was who used his pistol so freely but ineffectively. Afterward, on the renewal of the pursuit, the three had made the charge down the bank of the inlet; but our prisoner had no knowledge of what had befallen his companions.

It had not been a quickly told tale. Hopkins had spoken slowly, in a dull, hopeless tone, even in the midst of his narrative. The fellow seemed utterly cowed.

"Done, eh?" said Simon, with a chuckle. "Now, Jack?"

"I have gained the knowledge I desired," said I. "I think he has not lied. But as to what to do with him—what say you, Simon?"

His answer was a pantomime of throwing something overboard.

"No," said I, firmly, though the reason that lay behind Northen's suggestion was patent.

"Why not?"

"Frankly, I don't fancy the job. He's likely to die of wet and cold as it is. Give him that chance."

"Chance be d—d!"

"Well, he'll not go overboard at present," said I, returning the fierce glance with which Simon was honoring me. "Here, you Hopkins! get back to your hole! I'll throw some dry clothes down to you."

When I turned, I saw Miss Grant standing on the ladder leading from the cabin. How much she had heard I knew not, but evidently sufficient to make the situation clear to her. I gave her a bow, and, assisting Hopkins to his feet, guided him forward. He neither spoke nor looked about him as he went back to his dark refuge. Indeed, he was as a man drugged out of consciousness of his surroundings.

A startled, half-suppressed shriek made me spring up from the

hatch. Aft a scene was enacting which was full of portent of trouble. Miss Grant had mounted to the deck, and Simon, dropping the tiller (the breeze had almost died out), had advanced toward her. In a passion at my interference with his little plan of drowning our captive, he had chosen to do that which, as he believed, would most greatly enrage me; and now his arm was round the girl's waist and he was endeavoring to kiss her. But before he could succeed I was beside them, tearing her from his grasp and striking at him, too, with all my strength. He staggered under the blow, which was a very creditable one; and then his knife was out, and I had drawn a pistol from my pocket. 'Twas unloaded, but luckily he thought it otherwise.

So we stood for a moment, facing each other, and each, I dare say, regarding death as very near. Brief meditation of the sort sometimes cools the blood from fever-heat to chilliness.

"This is madness, sheer madness, Simon," said I. "We cannot quarrel."

"Blast me! but a blow!" he growled.

"No sooner struck than regretted. Remember the bond between us. The treatment of this lady was agreed upon. We have a contract—"

"Ay!" He fairly shot the word at me.

"Which means too much to be broken. Be sensible, man. The jewels can be yours in only one way. If one of us kills the other, the survivor can whistle for them; for lacking the other's secret writing he will have to prove the death, and—"

"Mind ye, Jack," said he, with an oath, but in a much less hostile tone. "Here, I've put away the knife: pocket the pistol, will ye? We'll keep the contract."

He sheathed his weapon, and turned from me. The fire seemed to have gone out in a flash. The change in his manner was too abrupt wholly to please me, yet I felt myself a victor, and worried no whit about his sudden pacification. Had I been a little older, or a little more experienced in the guile of the human heart, I might not have shaken off the doubt so lightly; for a blow is a serious matter with men of spirit. But, being, as I was, in high good humor, I addressed the girl, who had remained a witness of the dispute.

"If you please, Miss Grant," said I, "we will try to discover the wherewithal for breakfast."

XVI.

All things considered, the voyage thus begun was completed very peacefully, and, let me add, pleasantly. The breeze, which had failed us on the morning of the argument with Simon, sprang up again that afternoon, and from the hour it filled the sails we had little cause to complain of the weather. Nor were we disturbed by overly inquisitive vessels. Many we passed at a distance, a few glided by almost within hail. But we spoke only one. Luckily, we encountered no

man-of-war, though the odds are that, had we met one, her captain would have ignored the presence of our insignificant craft in his lordly neighborhood. As we drew into broader waters there was now and then an experience with rougher seas, but the *Medusa* proved herself a very duck for riding the waves, and (as indeed she pre-eminently was) a most comfortable craft for her size in anything short of a gale. After a little, too, life aboard her settled down to a sort of routine. Northen, as the master-mariner, was generally at the helm except in the hours when I took his place to allow him sleep, of which he required marvellously little. His food was brought to him on deck, but, as a rule, I dined in the cabin, where the two girls and the boy and I made a party which got along cheerily enough. Truth to tell, the pranks of Peggy would have enlivened a mourners' bench. Charlie was happy to be her echo, and often Miss Grant and I caught something of the lass's spirit of merriment, though at other times the elder girl's manner to me was dominated by a gentle dignity which, whatever its purpose, I deemed most alluring. And as I strove to imitate it, our conversations now and then grew so formal that 'twas hard to refrain from laughing, when the realization of their stiffness burst upon one. But of those gatherings of the four about the cabin table I have mainly recollections of much mirth and something closely akin to good-fellowship. I own that food and drink took a fresh savor from such circumstances. Especially of an evening, when the lamp was lighted, the box of a room had a wonderfully home-like air—or, at least, what I supposed to be such; for my experiences of the sort were not great enough to enable me certainly to recognize it. To me 'twas delightful. The chatter of the children often saved me from need of speech, leaving me free to study the young woman who sat opposite, her face bright with smiles, perhaps, at some absurdity of Peggy's, her hair glistening with the play of lights which came and went as the lamp swung to the motion of the sloop. At such moments her beauty stole upon me as the harmony of distant music sometimes gains unwarned possession of one's senses. And I thought—well, 'twas clear that I had been an instrument of beneficent Fate in saving her from the sorrow of union with a brute. I found, moreover, that the same thoughts would come to me again when I took my turn of duty, or when, rolled in a cloak, I lay down to sleep upon the deck. But if I was wakeful, what mattered it? Sleep is good, but some things are better. Say that I was watchful of Simon, and suspected treachery; say anything you please; but the fact remains that there was no regret for slumbers abridged. Yet—enough of all this. Let me turn back to the story I have to tell.

Of Northen's conduct after our encounter nothing but good is to be recorded. To Miss Grant he was respectful; to me, surly, but no more so than commonly. Miss Peggy made friends with him at once, the grim free-lance finding much curiously incongruous satisfaction in her attentions. As for Charlie, only this need be said: he was a boy, and Simon was one of the strongest men of his day. To be privileged to sit beside such a hero would be a delight to any lad of healthy mind and body.

So much for those of the Medusa's company who were to set foot on French soil. Hopkins was not of their number. Though he had been respited, and though, after Miss Grant made interest in his behalf, I was determined to save the fellow's life, reflection had convinced me that we must rid ourselves of him without delay. Northen assuredly had the right to demand that something be done to prevent his early return to England. The longer the prisoner remained aboard the sloop the more closely could he guess at our destination. The manner of disposing of him was a problem the solution of which was full of difficulties. Indeed, it was not until the night of the second day that a device was hit upon.

Out of regard for his welfare, I had given him brandy to counteract the effects of the drenching to which he had been subjected; and, the liquor at last freeing his tongue, he required no such pressing as had been necessitated in securing his statement. We had a long conversation, he and I, and under the inspiration of repeated nips he spoke of many details of the long struggle for the boy. Incidentally, he threw light upon the reasons for his own remarkable perseverance. I had despised him as a mere hireling; perhaps I said as much. At any rate, he caught my meaning, for he declared, "I wanted to be revenged."

"Revenged?" said I. "Why, pray?"

"You treated me like a dog."

"When? But, in replying, kindly remember your position. A 'sir' here and there will improve your discourse by seasoning it with the spice of respect, so to speak."

"In Mr. Best's office, sir. You may recall——"

"Ah, I understand," said I. "'Pon honor, Hopkins, you surprise me. I've failed to credit you with so worthy a spirit. For that I'll apologize, as a gentleman should who has been in the wrong. But as for my expressions on the occasion to which you refer, we'll let them stand, my man."

But the fellow's boast, or confession, as you may choose to call it, that he had been actuated by a higher motive than a yearning for money, strengthened my resolve to save him. A few hours later the plan suggested itself.

"We'll tranship him," said I to Simon. "Contrive to put him aboard some tub outward bound on a long voyage, and he'll not be likely to annoy us further."

Northen grumbled a bit, but was finally won over. In the course of the following morning he pointed out a brig a couple of miles ahead of us, but on which we were steadily gaining. She was a fat, slow-going craft, very deeply laden, and making little headway in the light air which was stirring.

"What is she?" I asked.

"British, or I'm a lubber," he answered.

"Where for, think you?"

"That's to be found out," said he. "Leave this business to me, Jack."

"So be it," said I, only too glad to shift the management of the affair.

In an hour we were close to the brig, which grew in clumsiness and ugliness on nearer acquaintance. Her sails were old and patched, the paint on her hull was flaked and rusty; though the swell was long and easy, she swallowed like a pig in a mud-hole.

"Bring your man aft, and send the others below before I hail her," Simon added. Charlie and the girls heard him, and descended the cabin ladder reluctantly enough, but without awaiting a repetition of the command. Hopkins's eyes brightened as he caught sight of the vessel. There could be no doubt of his willingness to leave the *Medusa*.

"You are going——?" he began.

"Come along, and ask no questions," said I.

"Brig ahoy!" Simon shouted. "Who are ye, and whither bound?"

A man on the poop answered the hail, a short, thick-set, red-faced old chap, the skipper probably, and no bad master for his craft in the matter of appearance.

"The *Polly B.*, London, for the Cape," he roared, in a voice of tremendous depth and volume. "Who be ye?"

"I'll run alongside," cried Simon, and with a deft movement of the tiller the sloop was set to within a few yards of the larger vessel.

"Hold her as she is," Northen whispered, relinquishing the helm to me. Then he called to the skipper, "Heave us a line, will ye?"

"Ay, ay," came the answer; and a rope was thrown. Simon caught it up, and thrust it into Hopkins's hands.

"Jump!" he commanded. I am not sure whether the poor devil took the hint, or was tossed overboard. At all events, there he was in the water, striking out manfully for the brig, and Simon was again at the *Medusa*'s tiller. From the deck of the *Polly B.* the skipper was surveying the scene in speechless amazement. Not until the sloop had begun to widen its distance from him did he recover sufficiently to thunder out a demand to know what in or under this world the performance meant.

"A passenger for ye," bawled Simon. "Haul in your line, you fool, or he'll drown."

A sailor or two sprang to the old fellow's assistance, and presently Hopkins was hoisted up the side. A little group gathered about him,—we could see the clustered heads,—and then the master-mariner jumped on the rail and shook his fist wildly, roaring after us threats and curses which I trust brought relief to his feelings. But what could he do? Pursuit was hopeless. He might have let fly at us with a musket, but probably his fire-arms were not to be got at instantly. There was nothing for him but to make the best of the situation,—which, to his mind, would likely enough mean unpleasant days for Hopkins. I did not envy that person his voyage to the Cape. Yet 'twas doubtless preferable to the fate Simon had urged for him.

For two days more we sailed on in very enjoyable fashion, as has been explained. All our passengers took kindly to the sea, in so far, at least, as being proof against the malady Neptune brings upon most novices; and I think they were in no vast haste to find themselves in

port. Our exact destination was known only to Northen, my stipulation being merely that it should be safe, but I supposed we could not be very far from the end of our cruise. 'Twas not surprising, therefore, on awakening one morning to behold the coast within two or three miles, a somewhat rough stretch of land, of no vast natural beauty. Before a favoring breeze we were drawing in rapidly toward the mouth of a small bay.

"Our port, Simon?" said I, inquiringly.

"Yes," said he, curtly.

"Clever navigation. You must have known the road like a book. Where might we be?"

"That's France, fast enough," said he, evasively. "There's no sizable town hereabouts."

On we went, Simon steering boldly for the little harbor as if quite sure of his course. As we approached, the mouth showed even narrower than I at first had judged it to be; for on one side a low sandy cape jutted out, like a spur from a boot-heel, contracting the passage to less than a hundred yards. Close to this spit the water seemed shallow, the channel evidently skirting the other shore, which we hugged in passing through the strait. And then the whole bay lay within view; for it was but a contracted sheet of water, singularly regular in the curves of its shore, except on the seaward side, where the sand-spit stretched like a chord of the missing quarter-circle. A few hovels lined the beach to our right, and before them an old fishing-boat was rotting on the sands. Half-way up the slope on the left hand was a house, of no pretensions to architectural beauty, but of considerable size. Near by were several groves and a few small fields, but the land for the most part appeared to be devoted to grazing, if, indeed, any use was found for a share of it. These observations were to be made quickly; for the circuit of the bay could hardly have equalled a mile.

Dropping anchor within stone's throw of the beach, we launched the tiny tender carried on the sloop's deck.

"You'll be the one to go ashore," said I. "My knowledge of the lingo wouldn't carry me far."

Simon entered the boat, and, throwing over an oar, began to scull for the land.

"Where are we, Mr. Holmes?" said a voice at my shoulder. Miss Grant had come on deck so quietly that I had failed to hear her step.

"That's not for me to guess—yet," said I. "Really, I don't know anything of our whereabouts, save that we're beyond British clutches, —which, for the time being, is quite enough."

"He has gone to make inquiries?"

"Yes; inquiries, that is, as to our reception. Without trouble he could stick a pin in the map to show our position. He's no stranger to these waters."

"And he has not informed you?"

"No."

There was a pause while Simon beached the tender and started for the house on the hill.

"He seems to be familiar with the path," said I, noting the speed our envoy was making. The girl laid a hand on my arm, and spoke with an impulsiveness she seldom displayed.

"Mr. Holmes, I fear that man. Are you sure of him?"

"As of myself," said I; "that is, Miss Grant, when, as in this instance, the noose which may be dangling for me has a twin brother ready for his accommodation. There's nothing to equal a joint gallows in insuring mutual honesty."

"The gallows?" she repeated. "Surely you are in no danger of—"

"Stretching hemp?" said I, finishing her sentence for her. "Well, I'm not absolutely clear on the point. Nobody can tell what eccentricities the law may indulge in. If 'twas all clear and plain sailing, the lawyers would starve, you know."

Then Miss Peggy and Charlie appeared, and descended upon us with a fine rush of questions. What had become of Simon? Who lived in the old house? Could they catch fish in the bay? When were we going to land? Was the water warm enough for swimming? And so on, and so on, until, finally, Peggy decided that she needs must try angling at once, and ordered her slave to improvise tackle. Thereupon the pair hurried off to rummage the cabin for some substitute for hooks.

"This has been a voyage I shall never forget," said I. "May we fare as pleasantly on dry land!"

"We?" Miss Grant seemed fond of repetitions that morning.

"Certainly. For a time, at least, we shall not part company, unless you so desire."

"I—I—I hardly know," she said, hesitatingly. "Oh, Mr. Holmes, what is there for me to do? In a strange country, penniless, friendless—"

"You are neither!" I cried, hastily. "Pray don't say that. You and your sister shall not want a friend so long—" But then I checked myself, for the girl had burst into tears and turned from me. What could the trouble be? Dry-eyed had she been when she styled herself friendless; now she was weeping at a declaration of most friendly import. Vainly I cast about for an explanation. There was nothing for it but to strive to cheer her on general principles, so to speak.

"Miss Grant," I blundered on, "luck—that is to say, circumstance—has thrown us together. I—I gave you a pledge, and it shall be kept. You shall be honored as I would honor my sister—if I had one, you understand. I'm responsible for getting you into this pickle, and I'll see you safely out of it. Don't cry; please don't! If only you'll stop, I'll promise to go back to England and call out Sir James Ransley, or Mr. Harding, or any two other gentlemen you may elect."

I was not so ignorant of the way to treat a woman as I had supposed myself. She wiped her eyes, and faced me again.

"I believe you would," she said, in a curious tone, as if she were speaking more to herself than to me.

"Assuredly," said I, earnestly.

"Then you will give me your word?" I vow, she was smiling again.

"Yes, yes," said I. "Pick the men."

"Promise to dismiss any such idea from your mind."

"Eh?"

"I have no wrongs to be avenged. Give me the pledge I ask."

"Well, you have it," said I, slowly; for the situation was far from clear, and confidence in my perspicacity was waning.

"I thank you most sincerely," said she; but she did not offer me her hand. This time I certainly should have taken it.

XVII.

"And how much longer will dear Simon be away?" Miss Peggy demanded, pettishly. "Why didn't he tell me he was going? It's too bad: you're none of you as good fun as he is."

"Run away and play, you fickle creature," said I. "In ten minutes Simon will be forgotten."

"But he is coming back?" she persisted.

"Of course he is. He has been absent nearly the three weeks he put as his limit."

"Let's go down to the wreck, Peggy," suggested Charlie.

"No; it's stupid," she objected.

"You can be captain."

"And you'll do whatever I tell you to?"

"He always does," said I. "Don't abuse your power, young lady."

She laughed saucily, and darted down the hill, the boy following her like her shadow.

"They're disposed of for the morning," said I, turning to the elder sister. "Now, how are we to entertain ourselves?"

The time was the heart of a fine, clear morning, a month from the Medusa's arrival in the French harbor. The place was a bit of turf in the shade of one of the groves near the house we had seen from the bay, a house which had been our abiding-place since our landing. Its owners, a quiet old couple, had received us willingly on the strength of I know not what tale composed by Northen and accepted by them without question. The "wreck" was what was left of the sloop. She had gone ashore the second night in port, while a stiff gale was blowing, and had been sorely damaged,—more seriously, in fact, than I could account for, in view of the shelter afforded by the harbor. Nay, the very fact that she had parted her cable was hard to explain. But a wreck she was, and beyond the hope of repair, at least without the help of skilled shipwrights.

On the first day ashore I gave Simon the key to the verbal lock protecting the jewels. At the same time I remarked that he might call me "Slayde" or "Holmes" as he preferred: each had served me well, and he was at liberty to make choice between them. But Simon

appeared to give little thought to the matter, a name, according to his sensible notion, being like a coat, which may be shifted at the owner's pleasure. All the terms of our contract were satisfied except his payment of one thousand pounds, which could not be looked for until the valuables had been sold. I had expected him to bid us an early farewell, but he was in no haste to go. Even when, after a week of idleness, he departed upon a mission of his own, it was with the understanding that he would soon return.

"I'm going to open communication with the bankers, Jack," he had said, "but I'll not visit England till the climate's had a chance to cool. I'll bring you the news."

All of which was reasonable beyond the point of cavil. So he had departed, carrying with him my best wishes for success in the negotiations, and a letter written by Miss Grant to be forwarded to the Fieldings. Of what she had told them I was, of course, ignorant. 'Twas not a bulky letter, but she had been long in penning it.

In the course of the first week Simon secured us from molestation by the local powers. Half a dozen uniformed horsemen clattered up to our door one day, and he went out to meet them. For ten minutes he and their leader, drawing aside from the others, talked most amicably, and then the party trotted off. Soft words and hard cash had established our character for eminent respectability.

Left to ourselves, we four fell into a manner of life reminiscent of that which had prevailed on the *Medusa*, but adapted to the new conditions. Of a morning, in bright weather, we spent much time out of doors, sometimes exploring the neighborhood, sometimes idling away the hours among the groves. When clouds threatened rain, or when the sea-breeze blew too keenly, we gathered in the great, low-ceiled kitchen. In the afternoons Miss Grant was often busy in the room she and Peggy occupied above-stairs. The hostess had done much to help the sisters in replenishing their wardrobes (a matter in which the stores of the sloop had been singularly inefficient), but there was, I was told, a deal of work to be done with thread and needle. So, after the noonday meal, I was thrown much upon my own resources, which proved none too entertaining. Yet there were the evenings, when we all met again, and when existence became peaceful contentment. I think it has been made evident that my preference is for a quiet, unostentatious life. Hence the need is less for me here to dilate upon the avidity with which I joined in the simple pastimes.

One great result of my constant association with Miss Grant was to lessen very considerably the formality which had pervaded her manner on board the *Medusa*. Yet it did not wholly disappear; for, though at times she was as blithe and companionable as if we had been friends from babyhood, she would, on occasion, hold me at arm's length, so to say, and then a stranger looking on would have deemed us acquaintances of the briefest standing. Once or twice it occurred to me, at such moments, to attempt to enliven her spirits, but without avail. Indeed, a mere mention of her guardian, or more especially of Ransley, was enough to seal her lips for as much as a quarter of an hour, a fact which was entirely beyond my power of explanation. Nor did she

appear anxious to learn my exploits. Thus, as it happened, our talk had been singularly impersonal. Or, rather, it had been impersonal up to the morning when Peggy, having wailed for the missing Simon, led Charlie away to the wreck.

"Now how are we to entertain ourselves?" I had asked the elder girl. She was seated upon a bench, which we fetched from the house on warm mornings. I was stretched out on the grass half a dozen feet away.

"What do you suggest, Mr. Holmes?" said she.

"Well, to begin with," said I, stirred by impulse to a speech in contemplation for some time, "you might cease addressing me as 'Mr. Holmes.'"

The broad brim of her hat almost hid her face; for she did not look at me as she answered with a question: "You wish me to call you something else?" She spoke very composedly, but, as has just been said, her face was averted.

"Yes; I do wish a change," I went on. "First, because 'Mr. Holmes' is wofully unfriendly; second, because it is not my name."

"Not your name?" she asked, turning quickly and gazing at me in surprise.

"No: I am John Slayde. I merely borrowed the other title. I've half suspected that Charlie might have confided so much to you, or to Peggy."

"He certainly did not tell me. After he was brought to Southview House I knew, of course, that he was a Brotherton. I supposed that before that time you had lent him your name."

"We took it simultaneously."

"When you adopted him?"

"He mentioned that ceremony?"

"Yes; he told everybody at Southview House about it."

"Excellent boy!" said I. "But to go back a trifle: I am John Slayde, an American in exile, partly from choice, and partly from the machinations of my relatives in and near Boston, in the State of Massachusetts. I should have told you this weeks ago. If you care to have more of my history, pray question me."

"I had surmised your country," said she, with a smile; "from your accent, you know."

"And I have thought it English of the English!" I groaned.

"I like it," said she, so kindly that I was much comforted. "But please tell me, Mr.—Mr.—Slayde, isn't it?—have you seen service?"

"Eh? Oh, some service. That is, I made a voyage as supercargo."

"I meant in the army or navy."

"No: I am a civilian. Why did you think otherwise?"

"Pardon me, but the scar—"

"On my cheek? Oh, I got that in a duel," said I. "Shall I tell you about it?"

"Pray do." And then, with a new note in her voice, "Was it about a—a—lady?"

"No," I confessed, somewhat reluctantly: "I don't recall the cause."

"Were you challenged?"

"Not exactly. That is, the—er—er—arrangement was mutually satisfactory," said I, hastily. "Another young fool and I met with swords, and stuck each other at the first thrust. Then I had to retire to the country for a time, and there I fell in with Charlie. Can I tell you anything more?"

Her face grew thoughtful, as, after a pause, she said,—

"You surely cannot be willing to remain indefinitely in this dull corner of the earth. You have been very, very kind, but we have no right—"

"Come, come," I broke in. "Why should I desire to depart? Gladly would I tarry here forever."

"That is impossible," said she, very gravely. "You have your way to make in the world. It is wrong for us to suffer you to waste your time and opportunities. Besides, we are in your debt. What you have expended in our behalf I hope to repay, but—"

Again I interrupted her. "Don't talk of money, I beg," said I. But on she went steadily enough :

"When I am of age I shall be able to recompense you. I shall have, I think, about ten thousand pounds. My guardian must turn it over to me. He cannot escape that, can he?"

"I don't know, and, what's more, I don't care," said I, somewhat hotly. "That is, you know, I don't care, so far as repayment to me goes. But if he tries to cheat you, we'll see whether he can't be brought up with a round turn."

"In the mean time, however," she continued, "I must find a home for Peggy and myself. The Fieldings may receive us. Their reply to my letter will, I hope, bring news that their door is open."

"As if there could be doubt!" I cried, though not altogether joyously; for the day of her return to England would be a grievous one to me. "If there's blood in their veins, their arms, let alone their door, will be opened wide."

"You see no reason why they should hesitate?"

"Not the shadow of one. Though they maligned me,—ah! I know they did,—I think better of them than to imagine that they would hesitate for an instant."

"Their letter will answer the question," said she, with a smile that suggested more of sadness than of joy.

"And Simon will bring it," said I. "He agreed to arrange for receiving the reply."

"You still have no doubts of him?"

"None. He's as honest—to his friends—as old Jean, our host, whom you were praising the other day."

"The loss of the boat—"

"Was an accident."

"Which effectually cut off retreat from this place by sea."

"True. But 'twas due merely to carelessness, I assure you. If he contemplated treachery, why did he waste his substance in bribing the soldiers?"

"That I cannot explain," said she, "but my distrust of him is

as great as ever. Why does it exist? I do not know; I merely fear."

"Well, when he returns——" said I, springing up and looking toward the house. "Speak of angels! There he is, Miss Grant. There's somebody with him. Who the—beg pardon; I mean he's accompanied by a stranger."

Northen left the other man at the door of the house, and walked toward us. Bowing to the young lady, he gave her a letter. He handed me one also.

"Is your business finished?" I asked.

"No; but 'tis in hand," he answered.

"The bank's tenacious?"

"Ay."

"You had no mishaps?"

"No."

"Who's that yonder?"

"He brought that letter you're holding."

I broke the seal, and read, first to myself, and then aloud:

"Mr. Godfrey Harding presents his compliments to Mr. John Slayde, sometimes known as Mr. John Holmes, and requests the honor of a personal meeting, for the amicable arrangement of certain matters of mutual interest. The time and place shall be such as Mr. Slayde selects. Mr. Harding further proposes that the conference, being of a private nature, shall be without witnesses, and that each party to it shall be unarmed. An early reply, by the bearer of this, will greatly oblige Mr. Harding."

For a moment nobody spoke. Then Miss Grant, springing from her seat and running to me, cried, "No! no! Decline to meet him. There's some trap here. Beware! beware!"

"Think twice, Jack," growled Simon.

"How did he get track of us?" I demanded. "How did the messenger find his way here?"

"The young lady's letter must have let out the secret," said Simon. "The man came to me straight enough, at the place where I was awaiting the answering letter. As things are, I could see no harm in him, so I brought him along."

Miss Grant's eyes fell before mine. Yet she had no cause to blame herself. She had requested the vicar and his wife—so much I knew—not to forward tidings of her whereabouts to her guardian. At the worst they had merely abused her confidence; the fault was not hers.

"Let's talk to the envoy," said I, and moved toward the house, the stranger advancing to meet us. He was a middle-aged, fair-skinned, thin-lipped fellow, dressed plainly but neatly,—a man of discretion, I judged from his face and bearing. He met my glance boldly.

"Your name, and why are you here?" I asked, pretty sharply.

"Robert Martine. I represent Mr. Godfrey Harding."

"You are aware of the contents of this letter?"

"I am, sir. Mr. Harding gave me an outline, instructing me to impress upon you the peaceful character of the meeting he desires."

"He seems to have posted you as to details."

"I am his confidential agent, sir."

"Well, then, what's his business with me?"

"That, sir, you must learn from his lips."

I drew Simon aside, and asked if the messenger had been more communicative with him.

"No: he's too shrewd to be a parrot," said my ally. "He told me nothing. We travelled like two dumb men. Will you take advice?"

"I'm open to it," said I, guardedly.

"Then accept the offer. Harding can't harm ye, can he?"

"Oh, I'll trust his word: he's a gentleman."

"Ye're out of the power of him or his cursed law. He sees that, and wants to make the best of a bad bargain."

"How?"

"There's the gal. He's got money of hers, you've told me."

"That may be the explanation," said I, meditatively. "At any rate, the chance that it is will be worth taking. Now for the time and place?"

Simon's arm shot out its full length as he pointed toward the bay.

"Bleeding bones! but there's the spot made for it," said he,—"the beach this side of the sand-spit. Let him run into the bay in his cutter or lugger, and be put ashore in his small boat. The time may be as soon as he can get here."

"Not a bad notion, Simon," said I, with approval; for the plan would not necessitate my leaving Charlie and the girls. "Here, I'll call the messenger, and give him his reply."

Martine paid respectful attention to what I had to tell him.

"I shall start at once, sir," he said, "and, since Mr. Harding is anxious to reach an understanding, you may count on his appearance within a fortnight."

And off he marched, declining an invitation to break bread with us. I sought Miss Grant, but she had disappeared while the envoy was receiving his instructions. When I saw her again (two hours or more later) she came to me in the grove, and gave me a brave smile, which was more than half belied by the redness about her eyes.

"You are to meet him?" she said. "I feared that you would agree to do so, but I knew not how to persuade you to refuse."

"There will be no danger," said I. "But let us talk of something else. You've had good news, I trust?"

"While Mr. Fielding does not say so directly, I gathered from his letter that he would not communicate with my guardian. It is strange, very strange. I wish you had not—"

"But you're not giving me your news," I protested. "Is it bad? Or don't you desire me to know it?"

"They make a very kind offer. They—they—"

"Yes?" said I, in encouragement.

"They are ready to welcome Peggy at once."

"And yourself?"

"After a time—perhaps. But—but—you do not realize—"

"No, I do not," said I, gravely. "Yet it is my opinion that were the gentleman somewhat younger and not of his cloth, I might find a

method to persuade him to enlighten my stupidity. I even conceive that the man who had promised to guard my sister—had I one—might not be exceeding his duty if he pursued the method I have in mind."

"And nothing could make her more unhappy!" she cried, and, turning from me, hurried back to the house.

"Well, I still hold to my opinion," I reflected, looking after her, but not attempting to follow. "What all this fuss is about is beyond my comprehension."

XVIII.

For a day or two after Harding's agent had gone back to his principal, Miss Grant honored me with little of her society save when the children were about or when Simon was in earshot. Even at such times she was nervous and distraught, as if her thoughts were occupied far more with other questions than with the trifles in which I essayed to interest her. Then her manner changed markedly, approaching so closely to its former phase that, though I was no master of the mysteries of the female heart, I believed that she had come to some decision or other and was, therefore, the less perturbed. What her project might be I did not inquire; for 'twas more courteous not to attempt to force her confidence. Besides, her idea could be no more than tentative, so long as we were ignorant of the proposition her guardian would make. Yet often I was sorely tempted. Of an evening, for instance, when we were assembled in the great kitchen, listening, it may be, to some tale from Simon's lips,—my worthy comrade had developed unlooked-for resources as a story-teller, and, though he spun his yarns ostensibly for Peggy's amusement and actually at her command, the rest of us were willing auditors,—I might look up suddenly and catch her eye; and in it would be an expression which stirred me more than I could understand, filling me with the desire to spring to her side and beg her to let me proffer such counsel as was mine to give. But instantly her glance would fall, and, so far as I could guess, she was bestowing her thoughts upon the narrative. Strange tales were some of those Simon told of brave adventure by sea and land.

I marvelled that he should remain with us so uncomplainingly; but, as he explained, the recovery of the jewels was a tedious process, and for a time there was no reason why he should not tarry, if he chose. There was sound sense, too, in his suggestion that, for all Harding's protestations, no harm would result from having an able-bodied fighting-man at call when the meeting should take place on the beach. To that conference all of us looked forward with impatience. It robbed the days of half their old charm. Of a verity, such a matter of uncertainty and wide possibilities is as comfortless as a thorn in the flesh. And as the fortnight wore away, the uneasiness increased. Even the children were infected by it, though the cause had been kept from their knowledge.

Harding's coming was not delayed beyond the time fixed for it. On the fourteenth morning a sail was espied, and by noon a smart

lugger was close to the mouth of the bay. She cautiously felt her way through the passage, dropping her anchor perhaps a hundred yards from the harbor's entrance. A boat was put over the side, and a couple of sailors entered it. A third man followed them. When the oars dropped in the water, I set forth; but hardly had I gone a dozen yards when Miss Grant overtook me.

"Give up this meeting, I beg you," she pleaded. "The risk is too great. Why has he come, unless to entrap you? There is treachery here: I feel it, I know it."

She was very pale. Her voice was unsteady with entreaty. Her hands were clasped appealingly.

"My word is given," said I.

"Must I implore in vain? For my sake, for the sake of all of us—"

"For your sake I am meeting him."

"Then all the more earnestly I beseech you to turn back."

"I cannot."

"But, if go you must, at least go armed," she urged.

"And break my pledge?" said I, stubbornly. "No; that may not be."

"Not in answer to my prayers, Jack?"

"Not even for you, Marian; though it cuts me to the heart to say it."

I had carried my point. She drew herself up almost haughtily, and turned abruptly from me. Then on I marched toward the beach, thinking more of the girl than of the man I was to encounter. Harding was a gentleman; and I meant to watch him as keenly as a cat watches a mouse. Besides, there was Simon to be relied on in case of need. But, however the conference might result, I was inclined to bless it in advance. She had called me "Jack"!

The boat grounded on the heel of the cape, and Harding jumped ashore, his men remaining in the little craft. Dressed in black, he made a sombre figure as he walked along the white sands, moving with a sort of reluctance, it seemed to me, as I fitted my pace to his. When we had approached within twenty feet or thereabouts, we halted simultaneously. Had we been soldiers on parade, the unison could not have been more perfect.

"Mr. Harding, I believe?" said I, bowing, but not so imprudently low as to lose sight of his face.

"Mr. Slayde, or Holmes?" said he, with a mighty stiff nod.

"You may call me either," said I. He looked older, more care-worn, and a shade less arrogant than on the day of our encounter on the stairs; but he was still a big, masterful fellow, with the air of one more used to command than to obey. Yet now he appeared to be none too ready to lead in our discussion. Indeed, had not he requested the meeting, I should have judged that he came to it most unwillingly.

"You have business with me?" said I, breaking a pause which he seemed incapable of ending. "May I ask you to explain its nature?"

"There are several matters," he began.

"'Tis a fairly long account between us," said I.

"Yes; it is a long account, and a bitter one," he continued. "You have caused me great trouble."

"Possibly."

"You have balked me, as no other man ever did; you have frustrated the projects upon which I was most determined; you have beaten my servants, attacked my friends, and kidnapped my nephew and my wards."

"Doubtless our points of view differ."

"Why have you done these things? The boy has no inheritance: the girls have little, and what there is I control."

"Mr. Harding, you err entirely," said I, quickly; for the reproach of fortune-seeking stung. "I care not a penny for what they have or what they have not. You tried to steal the boy—"

"The son of my sister!" he rapped out.

"Yes; of a sister whom you had disowned. You compelled a good woman, who cared for him as for her own, to part with him. Your unrelenting persecution—"

"Induced you to enter her employ?" he broke in. "Why do you keep him, now that she is dead?"

"I knew nothing of the circumstances. I took the lad and adopted him—"

"Legally?"

"Practically—which is better. My reason? 'Twas that I didn't like your manner, Mr. Harding—you know when. But now I tell you this: the boy is, and has been, free to choose his company. If you think he will go to you, ask him: I shall not interfere."

"This is mere trifling," said he, sternly.

"It is the truth," said I. "The boy is free."

He laughed derisively.

"You question my word?" I cried. "By the Eternal! you shall give me satisfaction. I demand it as a gentleman from a gentleman; for, though our standards may differ somewhat, I believe you to be a man of honor."

He started, as if I had smitten him in the face, but his response to my words was far from what I had anticipated.

"A man of honor!" he repeated. "Yes, I am jealous of my honor. Let us end this interview. Go back, sir, to your friends, and I will return to my vessel. Go, while yet there is time."

There was passion in his tone, but, as I afterward came to know, 'twas more the heat of shame than of wrath. At the moment I totally misread him.

"No, Mr. Harding," said I; "here we remain until our business is concluded. On some future occasion we can settle our differences. Now,"—my anger was cooling fast, and I was beginning to remember the importance to the girl of what he might propose,—"now let us consider the affairs referred to in your letter. I may tell you at once that, while the Misses Grant are absolutely at liberty, I doubt if Marian Grant will ever consent to return to your roof. Your friendship for Ransley forbids that. By the way, sir, I may have a small matter to discuss with him. Was he wounded?"

"The surgeons dug a bullet from his shoulder," Harding answered, slowly. "However, so far as the girl is concerned, there is no cause for quarrel between you. His infatuation is cured, and no wonder."

"Eh?" said I.

"Since she is hopelessly compromised——"

"What?"

"You'll hardly require an explanation," said Harding, sarcastically.

"But, by heavens, I do require it," I cried. "I am pledged to shield the lady from all harm. I have guarded her as I would have guarded a sister, had I one, and he who slanders her must eat his words or pay the penalty. Do you withdraw the remark, sir?"

"Very gladly," said he. "'Twas but an expression of what I fear may be the general verdict against her. A marriage with Sir James Ransley, a man of wealth, would have been greatly to her advantage. I urged it, but now——" He hesitated.

"Your mission?" said I.

"It has to do with her property," he answered, speaking more quickly and more easily. "She has about nine thousand eight hundred pounds, in my keeping. I now desire to be rid of the charge as soon as possible. I will forward to her such sums as she may require for her suitable maintenance until she comes of legal age, when the residue will be paid to her at once. The younger sister's share may be transferred to any suitable person the elder girl selects as my successor as guardian. They will hardly return to England, I presume."

"There seems to be no very warm welcome awaiting them there," said I, a little bitterly, thinking of the vicar's letter and beginning to understand the cause of the coldness it showed toward Marian.

"I desire to add," Harding continued, "that the arrangements mentioned will be carried out in—in—in any event."

He stumbled strangely over the last words, as if their utterance were difficult. As he spoke, he glanced quickly about him. His gaze rested for an instant upon a tangle of underbrush, which grew low on the hill-side, where the sand ended and the soil began; and there came into his eyes a look which told as plainly as any tongue could tell that what he saw moved him greatly. I heard the snap of broken twigs, and whipped about just in time to see Northen, pistol in hand, break through the bushes and run toward us.

"Back, Simon, back with you!" I shouted. "What! would you dishonor my parole? You villain, you shall sweat for this outrage."

Unarmed as I was, what could I do but bid Harding take to flight? I turned to him, with the cry of warning on my lips—and beheld my gentleman and man of honor walking slowly toward his boat.

At that the truth burst upon me. The meeting was a trap, a treacherous betrayal well conceived, well carried out; a shameful bargain between a man mad for vengeance and a wretch who sought from it promise of immunity from the law's score against him. The blow struck in the defence of a helpless girl was to be fittingly requited. A vessel at hand to carry away plotters and prisoners, for Harding's wards and the boy would fall easy captives; a debt of a thousand pounds

wiped out in blood ; a fortune undisputed awaiting withdrawal from its hiding-place—I saw it all in a flash. And with equal quickness I realized that I had nothing to fear or to hope from Harding, and that to Simon alone was allotted the task of settling my fate. In all earnestness I say that 'twas difficult to discover any method of making his business either prolonged or troublesome. He had weapons, his strength was tremendous, and he was close upon me.

In certain conditions a man's wits work quickly—or rest from their labors forever. In the present instance I did the only thing offering the ghost of a chance, not so much of escape as of postponing the end by a moment or two. I am not a sprinter, nor have I ever been fond of running away, yet that day I ran like a racer down the slope of the beach, dodging from side to side to disconcert his aim and bending my body forward to reduce the target. Near the water's edge I turned sharply for a dash diagonally across the sands to the cover offered by the underbrush. A mocking laugh sounded in my ears. Simon, foreseeing my course,—no great generalship was involved,—was about to cut me off. He was hardly ten feet away, and his pistol was levelled for the shot he could hardly miss at that range.

Snap !

The hammer had fallen, but the weapon had missed fire. I glanced over my shoulder, and threw up an arm just in time to save my head from the pistol he had hurled at it. 'Twas an art Simon possessed in rare degree, his powerful muscles enabling him to make the impact of the pistol almost as dangerous as that of its bullet. This time he had exerted all his force, and though I had avoided a cracked skull 'twas at the cost of a fractured arm. With a yell of rage he pulled a knife from his belt, and sprang after me. On we dashed along the beach, the pursuer gaining inch by inch upon the pursued. A few yards more and he would be at my shoulder. I dodged to the left, then to the right, but he was not to be shaken off. His curses—he was not husbanding his breath as he might—rang in my ears.

Suddenly I dropped ; for an old trick of boyish sports had come to mind. His foot struck my body, and he pitched headlong. His fall was heavy, but he was up again almost as quickly as I was. Yet the stratagem had given me a little sorely needed start, and, better still, had permitted me to head straight for the undergrowth. I doubt, though, whether 'twould have been my fate to reach it without succor, the fall having jarred the broken bone cruelly and the pain in the injured part having become so violently acute that a sort of faintness came in its train ; and with beclouded senses I reeled like a man far gone in liquor. But help was at hand, as you may have surmised from the tell-tale circumstance that I am alive to put this incident in black and white.

A shrill shout in a boyish, high-pitched voice, a vanishing of the mist from my eyes, a frantic spring to one side, and then the card was played which won the game. Charlie had broken from the tangle of bush and brier and run forward a little way on the sand. As my vision cleared, I saw him drop on one knee and crook his left arm for a rest, just as he had been taught to do when he and I were at practice and he was acquiring the knack of steadyng his weapon for a careful

shot. Then two reports rang out in quick succession, as he emptied one of my double-barrelled pistols *secundum artem*.

Staggering on until I reached the boy, I snatched the second pistol he extended to me, and wheeled to view my pursuer. Simon had been hit, and hit in effective fashion, by at least one of the bullets; for he was now raising himself from the ground as if the process were painful. 'Twas no disgrace to him that, once upon his feet, he took to his heels. Brave he was beyond question, but brave in a reasoning degree. His case was lost. A foolhardy youth would have rushed on to be dropped in his tracks when I chose to close the incident: the old fox was there to kill and not to be killed. So, like a wise man, he turned tail, hobbling as he ran with the limping gait which lead in one leg is prone to produce.

"Well done, lad!" I cried. "I say to you what I would say to few men: I could hardly have done better myself."

But I added no more praise (at that time); for his lips were beginning to twitch, and I feared lest, after proving himself a man in an emergency, he might, under soft words, yield to the reaction from the strain, and conduct himself with a weakness not alien to his years, yet to be regretted.

Harding had looked back when the shots sounded, but now he was walking toward his boat, neither quickening nor slackening his pace because of the failure of his co-conspirator. I might have sent a bullet after him; at first, indeed, the temptation was strong, but his coolness won my admiration. Nor did I make haste to enforce upon Simon the just penalty for his betrayal. The heat of the fight was over, and the villain should have his chance. I could not bring myself to fire while the mark he offered was so big that even a soldier must have hit it. So the boy and I stood watching our retreating foes. Harding was first at the boat, with Simon trailing a score of yards in the rear.

"Now he has all the law allows, and more, perhaps," said I. "If I wing him, Charlie, 'twill be a shot you'll be proud to remember beholding."

I raised the pistol in my sound hand, taking deliberate aim. A little puff of sand just beside him showed where the bullet dropped.

"Off the target," I observed. "One more try, and we shall be done."

Again I pulled the trigger, firing this time seemingly at random, but really with the quick aim in which I excel. And Justice nerved my arm, and made my eye as true as an eagle's. Simon pitched forward; yet in a moment he had raised himself upon his hands and knees and was crawling toward the boat. Neither Harding nor his men advanced to aid him, but when he reached the boat the sailors helped him into the bows, and, shoving off, rowed lustily for the lugger.

"Did he hurt you, Uncle Jack?" Charlie asked, anxiously, as we climbed the hill. "You're very pale, and your arm—"

"Is broken," said I, "but 'twill mend. Had you not interfered, my boy, I'd have had worse wounds to worry over. You were in the nick of time."

"Marian sent me," he answered. "She was frightened, and she gave me your pistols, and told me to follow Simon, but not to let him see me."

"He had left the house then?"

"Yes, sir. He said you might need him, so he'd steal down behind the bushes. Then she sent me after him. When I saw him with his knife out, and running, why, I knew that she must have been right. And, oh, Uncle Jack, I'm so sorry if I missed him the first time!"

"Never mind," said I, consolingly. "No doubt you'll do better next time. But your work to-day was very creditable, Charlie. Don't think I'm a captious critic. By the way, though, there's another lesson for you from this matter. Simon trusted to a single barrel. Then his pistol missed fire; which shows—"

"Oh, she made it!" he cried, cutting short the moral I was about to point.

"She? Marian?" I asked, incredulously.

"Yes, sir. When he was starting out, she made Peggy ask him to fix the rigging of her boat,—you know he'd do anything for Peggy, but so would I, if she'd ask me,—and while he was busy with the strings he left his pistol on the table in the kitchen. He was right beside it, but when he wasn't looking, Marian dropped a feather in water and wet the priming. When he hurried out, he didn't notice what she'd done."

"Which was a very fortunate circumstance," said I, gravely. "My lad, heed this: as the philosopher says, distrust a woman's reasons, but never her intuitions."

Near the house Charlie ran ahead, to give the news to Peggy, I suppose. His desertion was welcome, for the girl to whose forethought I owed my life was coming to meet me, and there was need of no witnesses. Perhaps from the story the lad had told, perhaps from the talk with Harding, perhaps from both, I had formed a resolution,—the most satisfactory, the most sensible, and the best resolution which ever was arrived at by mortal man.

At such a moment of perils surmounted, men and women lay aside the masks with which they strive to hide their souls' secrets. I shall never forget her look, at once tearful and joyous, appealing and triumphant, tender and brave. It set my heart to fluttering. Then, it may be, she read in my face something of my resolution; for she dropped her eyes, and flushed rosily.

"Miss Grant—Marian," said I, in a voice which shook like a coward's knees, "I must make a confession. I have broken my pledge to you. I promised to guard you as I should wish my sister to be guarded. I have failed. I never have been blessed with a sister, which may account, in part, for my failure; but I know that—that—well, that I shall be sorry Simon's pistol missed fire, unless—unless—you will be my wife."

What answer she made is not to be here recorded. In truth, my remembrance is suggestive of a cloudy mist with the glorious sun breaking through: so that I can recall neither her words nor others which I addressed to her. But, whatever she said, 'twas not "no," and presently her head was upon my shoulder, and I was blessing the wise dispensation of Providence by which a man with only one arm disabled is not wholly barred from the observances of such an occasion.

A little later, while happiness was banishing all thought of the enemy, Charlie came running up with tidings which called us back to the things of earth. The lugger, he announced, now clear of the bay and standing out to sea, had hoisted a flag. We could see it clearly enough, a small, bright ensign, which fluttered far below the peak, a gay bit of bunting for the sombre message it conveyed.

"A signal?" asked Marian.

"Yes; for us," said I. "Simon Northen has gone to his reward. I would that he had not the guilt of this day's work on his soul; for the traitor, I think, great as his merit in other matters may have been, will fare none too well in the making up of the last account."

XIX.

And now for a parting word to close this narrative of events throughout which I ever strove to bear myself as any gentleman might; a narrative which, beginning with a chance acquaintance with a lad, ends with the winning of a wife. Marian and I were married by a rural *curé* soon after my injured arm, set by a surgeon old Jean fetched from the nearest village, had begun to mend. Not long thereafter we removed to Paris, where for a time we tarried in contentment, leading the quiet existence I so greatly delight in. Among Simon's effects had been found a considerable amount of money,—nearly two thousand pounds, in fact,—which enabled us to live in modest comfort, though my wife was never quite reconciled to its use, in spite of the evident truth that 'twas ours by all the rules of war. In Paris, too, an agent of Harding's sought us out, and made good the guardian's declaration that he would transfer his ward's property to its owner without delay. So kindly did fortune smile upon us that at last I quitted France with deep regret, and only from regard for Marian's plea that Peggy and Charlie should be reared among people of their own race. England being little to her liking and not at all to mine, we sailed for America; and in due time I came again to Boston. There also good news awaited us. My old friend Richard Warbeck had managed with great skill a remnant of my heritage which he had held back, without my knowledge, in the days when I played the man of fashion in London; and, moreover, as a repentant uncle among my early persecutors had named me in his will (to my substantial benefit), fear of want disappeared from our horizon.

So far so good. How I got to better terms with my kinsfolk—a matter in which my wife may have had a hand; how Peggy led Charlie such a dance as only a steadfast lover willingly treads; and how the duchess's jewels were brought across seas, and thereupon were struggled for at stake of life and honor, are matters which can be but mentioned here. Nor are they essential to this record, which is merely the history of a diffident wooing crowned with success. Nor in my eyes do they seem important in comparison; for the gaining of a good wife is more to a man than gold or precious stones, or the love or hate of all others of his blood.

THE END.

A YEAR OF BUTTERFLIES.

THE fair, fragile things which are the resurrection of the ugly, creeping caterpillars are associated in our minds with all that is joyous and beautiful, with the flowers and dreaminess of summertime, with our airy, buoyant thoughts, and with the nobler resurrection which we hope to find somewhere in the infinite. Their presence in the gardens and meadows, and in the fields and along the river-banks, adds another element of gladness which we are quick to recognize; and even the plodding wayfarer who has not the honor of a single intimate acquaintance among them might, perhaps, be the first to miss their circlings about his path.

As roses belong to June, and chrysanthemums to November, so butterflies seem to be a joyous part of July. It is their gala-day, and they are everywhere, darting and circling and sailing, dropping to investigate flowers and over-ripe fruit, and rising on buoyant wings high into the upper air, bright, joyous, airy, ephemeral.

But July can only claim the larger part of their allegiance, for they are wanderers into all the other months, and even occasionally brave the winter with torn and faded wings.

On some bright spring morning, when the winter snow is melting and sending merry rivulets dancing and sparkling down every hill-side, and the meadows are wet and soft, and all the hollows are miniature lakes, we may look for the *Antiopa*, which, after living all winter in old buildings or wood-piles, creeps out to die in the warm April sunshine. This beautiful brown and yellow insect is interesting as being the first butterfly of spring, and about the only one that has successfully braved the trying ordeal of winter. Its wings expand from three to three and a half inches, and from the fact that the wings are jagged or tailed on the hind edge the butterfly may be recognized as belonging to the genus *Vanessa*. This brood of *Antiopa* dies very soon, but first deposits its eggs on elm- and willow-trees, where the caterpillar lives, after it is hatched, until about the 1st of July, when it becomes a chrysalis. This breaks in about two weeks, and when the butterfly first creeps out and spreads its fresh wings in the sunshine the color on them is very brilliant and rich as velvet. This brood of *Antiopa* deposits its eggs and dies, and a second brood of caterpillars is hatched, which goes through all the changes, producing the butterfly again before winter. In the autumn these butterflies may be seen hovering over heaps of apples in the orchard, and that is the best time to examine them, for then they are in more perfect condition than in spring.

Along in May, in the time of wind-flowers and violets and dandelions and liverwort and wild geraniums and early saxifrage, there is a marked increase in the number and variety of butterflies. The bright yellow *Colias*, distinguished by six legs and short antennae thickened toward the end, are plentiful in the vicinity of clover, upon which they

deposit their eggs. The color of their wings is bright yellow, with black border, and with small black dots near the centre of the fore wings. A second brood of *Colias* appears about the 1st of August, and is much more numerous than the early one. These butterflies may often be seen in vast quantities in fields where late clover is in bloom. Another May butterfly, which lives round apple-trees and deposits its eggs upon them, is the beautiful lemon-yellow *Papilio Turnus*, whose wings are ornamented with black stripes dotted with yellow, and which is among the largest of our butterflies. A relative of his, the *Papilio Asterias*, is often seen in his company, but is considerably smaller, the wings only spreading about four inches. The wings of the *Asterias* are black, with broad bands of yellow spots extending from the front edge of the fore wing to the back part of the hind wing, and with a row of yellow spots on the margin. The hind wings are tailed, and between the band of yellow and the row of yellow spots on the margin are seven blue spots.

Although the *Asterias* are quite common in May and June, they are far more numerous in July, and can then be found hovering over beds of parsley and sweet-scented phlox. They deposit their eggs on these plants, and it is there that the caterpillars feed. Other butterflies found occasionally in May are the *Semicolon*, *Comma*, and *Milberti*, all belonging to the genus *Vanessa*. The *Semicolon* is so called from the shape of the golden spot on the under side of each hind wing. The wings are tawny orange, shaded very dark near the body. They are thickly spotted with brown, and expand about two and a half inches, having a regular line of brown spots on the margins. The *Comma* is not quite so large, and is rarely found expanding more than two inches. The wings are dull orange, shaded on the margin with a purple tint. They are spotted with brown, and along the margin have a row of buff-colored spots. The *Milberti* is about the same size as the *Comma*, but more showy. The wings are of a rich velvety black, and there is a broad orange band extending across both pair of wings near the margin. On the hind wings there is a row of blue crescent-shaped spots between this band and the edge. Although these varieties of the *Vanessa* are often seen flying about in May, they are far more numerous and perfect in July, August, and September.

The *Troilus* appears about the middle of June, and resembles the *Asterias* very closely while in the winged state. The *Papilio Troilus* is never very numerous, and will probably be overlooked unless one is particularly observant. It has one row of yellow dots on the margin of both the fore and the hind wings, and the green on the hind wings is shaded into the tint of the wing, instead of being in distinct spots like the blue in the *Asterias*. The difference between the two butterflies is so slight that it is impossible to distinguish one from the other when they are on the wing. Along the roadsides, hovering over beds of nodding trillium and wake-robin and wild geraniums, over the white flowers of the blackberry-vines and the delicate white blossoms of the shad-flower, and among the clumps of lilac-bushes, may be seen swarms of the little red and brown butterflies which are generally classed together under the name of *Lycenians*. The small red variety

is one of the prettiest of the group, and is very common. It is often found fluttering over the grass in any sunny spot, and is called the copper butterfly, or *Lyceena Americana*. The brown variety, *Lyceena Epixanthe*, is somewhat rare, and is usually found near damp meadows and lowlands, apparently delighting more in green grass and sunshine than in flowers.

There is a beautiful blue speck of a butterfly which haunts the brier-fields and old pasture-walls where the high blueberry-bush and sweet viburnum love to linger. It is one of the most delicate of all the small butterflies, but has a ludicrously ponderous name, *Polyommatus Pseudargiolus*. However, its common name, Azure-blue butterfly, is more appropriate, as, when it is fluttering over flowers in the sunshine, it looks like a tiny speck of bright blue satin. A near relative is the *Lucia*, a little smaller, and of a more purplish black; another is the *Comyntas*, with violet-blue wings having black dots on the margin of the hind ones. The *Comyntas* lives in dry woods, and does not appear before July. Several other small butterflies which appear at the same time belong to the genus *Thecla*, readily distinguished by the peculiar manner in which their hind wings are tailed. Their color is a dull brown of various shades, marked in some of the varieties with specks of white or blue.

July is the gala-time of butterflies. Most of them have just left the chrysalis, and their wings are perfect and very fresh in color. All the sunny places are bright with them, yellow and red and white and brown, and great gorgeous fellows in rich velvet-like dresses of blue-black, orange, green, and maroon. Some of them have their wings scalloped, some fringed, and some plain; and they are ornamented with brilliant borders and fawn-colored spots and rows of silver crescents. The *Asterias* are there, the *Troilus*, the dusky-orange *Melitaea*, and the silver-spotted *Idalia*. They circle about the flowers, fly across from field to field, and rise swiftly into the air; little ones and big ones, common ones and rare ones, but all bright and airy and joyous,—a midsummer carnival of butterflies.

The largest butterfly we have is the *Archippus*. It is not so gaudy as some, but is yet very showy. The wings are tawny orange, beautifully bordered with black dotted with white, and are crossed by fine black veins, with several yellow and white spots extending up to the front border of the fore wings. A butterfly that is almost exactly like the *Archippus*, except for a band across the hind wing above the border, is the *Nymphalis Disippe*. It is found on the wing from the middle of July until October, and deposits its eggs on poplars and willows. Another variety of the *Nymphalis* is the *Ephestion*, differing from the *Disippe* in being clothed in blue-black instead of a gorgeous orange and black.

The genus *Argynnis* is almost invariably ornamented with silver markings: among the varieties are the *Idalia*, with a row of silvery crescent-shaped spots just within the black margin on the under side of the wings, found in grass-fields and among bushes by the roadside all through July and August; the *Aphrodite*, with the same silvery crescents, and with tawny orange wings shaded very dark near the

body, found about meadow-lands; the Myrina, similar to the last, but having black lines on the hind wings; and the Bellona, whose chief distinction is that it lacks the silvery spots.

Other July butterflies are the Melitea Pharos, very small, and with wings of dusky orange; the black and white Cynthia Huntera, expanding about two and a half inches, very pretty and very common; the Cynthia Cardui, more commonly called Thistle butterfly, because it loves the flowers of the thistle and because its caterpillar lives on the leaves of that plant; and the Cynthia Atalanta, a little larger than the other two, and with almost black wings.

Very interesting are the "little wood brownies," or Quakers, which belong to the genus *Hipparchia*. They do not appear in the brilliant colors of the butterflies that love flowers and sunshine, but, dressed in Quaker drab, seek the quiet and retirement of the woods, where they flit about in graceful circles over the shady beds of ferns and woodland grasses. Among them are the Eurytris, in fine Quaker drab, shaded a little darker toward the shoulders; the Alope, whose wings are dull brown; the Semidia, or Mountain butterfly, with grayish-brown wings spotted with a lighter shade of the same color; the Boisduvallii, another frequenter of mountains, larger and with more spots; and the Nephele, or Cloud butterfly, much rarer, and with grayish-brown wings on which are two eye-like spots.

Very curious and interesting are the Skippers,—*Endamus Titryrus*, *Hesperia Hobomok*, *Hesperia Peckius*, and *Hesperia Leonardus*. These Skippers are very small insects, but their body is robust, and they fly with great rapidity, not moving in graceful, wavy lines as the true butterflies do, but skipping about with sudden, jerky motions. Their flight is very short, and almost always near the ground. Their prevailing color is dusky brown, with pale whitish-yellow or transparent spots. But they can never be mistaken, as their peculiar motion renders their identification easy.

In connection with the butterflies, it may be well to add a few notes about moths. Identification of the classes may be made by observing their wings when at rest. The true butterfly holds both pairs of wings upright, the skippers elevate the fore part only, and the moth holds both pairs horizontally, folding the fore wings backward so as nearly to conceal the hind pair.

The moths are very beautiful, but are not often seen during the day, as they prefer to creep out after nightfall. Occasionally one may be found nestled in a dark corner under some leaf or behind the window-shutters. But they add nothing to the summer landscape, nor to the pleasure of the wayfarer who seeks the by-paths and fields. They are divided into two great classes, Hawk-moths, or *Sphinxes*, and Moths, or *Phalaenæ*; and these two classes are subdivided into many smaller ones. The most beautiful of all is the *Atticus Luna*, which I have occasionally found in deep woods, and have even hatched from cocoons found among the dead leaves. Indeed, this collecting of cocoons from branches, leaves, and other places is one of the best methods of obtaining perfect specimens. Put the cocoons in some out-of-the-way corner of the house, and as warm weather appears,

along in May and June, the moths will emerge, and can be examined at leisure, and afterwards be released or put into cabinets, as the possessor may choose.

Frank H. Sweet.

COLLEGE ATHLETICS.*

THE day for the pallid and bent student to be admired has passed ; the day when the "student's stoop" was considered a necessary accompaniment of intellectuality is gone ; the "brow sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" is no longer sought after. The fashion of tan has come ; it is realized that one will think, study, write, and do all kinds of mental work better if he is healthful. Red blood and sound nerves are necessary to sound thinking : so that students both in college and out are anxious to be and to seem robust.

It used to be that when a college boy returned home he was expected, by himself and by his family, to carry along the physical marks of hard study in the way of pallor, a stoop, and a general enervated condition ; this was looked for, even if he had not fainted dead away in the midst of his speech on Commencement Day from the strain of prolonged work.

All this has been changed ; it is realized that it is not worth while to wreck a student's health and send him out broken down and incapable physically of taking up the work which he had hoped to do in later life. The test has been made, and it has been shown that the athletes are equally good students with the non-exercising men, and that many of them are better ones. It has not been shown that the grade of any athlete is lower than it would have been if there had been no such thing as a gymnasium. The mental work is better, it is done with more ease, with less drain on the vital forces, it is clearer and sounder, and it remains longer in the memory.

The object of the college course is manifestly to educate, to develop the powers, and to prepare for manful and successful struggle with the duties of mature life. In order to do this well, the body has to be maintained in good working order, made as strong as possible, and rendered an obedient servant to the will. It was pressed in upon the consciousness of the world that the old method of education ignored too much the just demands of the body. The colleges turned out, in many instances, good students who were physical wrecks.

In order to remedy this evil, and maintain an equilibrium between the mind and the body, college athletics have come into existence, and have grown into one of the prominent features of modern university life.

University athletics have a history of about thirty years ; but their development within the last five years has been vast, and changes are constantly taking place. At the present moment they have assumed an importance that they did not possess even one year ago ; interest in them is more intense and general than it was even six months ago ;

* By one of the victors in the Olympian games of 1896.—ED.

prejudices are being overcome, and objections are being answered by statistics.

In this article I shall have something to say about what college athletics are, what they consist of, and their influences and results. They consist of rowing, foot-ball, base-ball, cricket, tennis, golf, bicycling, and track athletics; there are also gymnasium contests, which are duels more than anything else. Track athletics consist partly in running races; the distances are one hundred yards, two hundred and twenty, four hundred and forty, eight hundred and eighty, and a mile. These also include hurdling, over distances of one hundred and twenty and two hundred and twenty yards; these former are track events. The field events are high jumping, broad jumping, pole-vaulting, hammer-throwing, and shot-putting. The standing high and broad jumps were formerly the fashion, but they are now done away with; they used to have tugs of war, but these have gone out. Pennsylvania University has cricket; and so has Harvard. Golf has been taken up by most of the Eastern colleges, and has begun to be an inter-collegiate sport.

Princeton led in foot-ball for the year 1896. It has also the championship in base-ball. Yale leads in rowing, with the exception that she refuses to contest with Cornell. The best time on the one hundred yard sprint, in the inter-collegiate contests, is nine and four-fifths seconds; on the two hundred and twenty yard sprint, twenty-one and one-fifth seconds. The hundred yard dash and the half-mile record are the most phenomenal. Princeton, in the foot-ball contest with Yale which gave it the championship, scored twenty-four to six; it also beat Harvard twelve to nothing, previously. In a series of five games of Princeton with Harvard and Princeton with Yale, Princeton won in both cases three games out of each five.

The bicycle contest comes in a week that is set apart for this inter-collegiate event. The track athletic contest always comes the last Saturday of May; the Friday before that day is used for picking the men, in order to limit the contest on Saturday to the best men. The season for base-ball contests is the spring, and there are usually two games played on each of the home grounds, then one on neutral grounds. The foot-ball season opens a few days before the beginning of the fall term of college, and lasts until the Saturday before Thanksgiving in some colleges; but Cornell and Pennsylvania play on Thanksgiving.

The tennis contests come off annually early in the fall; they are held at Newport. The gymnasium contests are held in all colleges. The athletes of two universities have a contest in some large city convenient to both: such include horizontal bar work, parallel bar work, tumbling, wrestling, fencing, and gymnastics generally.

There are from twenty-five to forty representatives in inter-collegiate contests, from all over the country. This variation depends on whether the colleges have good enough teams to send. Every college has to pay a certain fee in order to belong to the Inter-Collegiate Association. The foot-ball games between Princeton and Yale are played on Manhattan Field; all the other games are played on college grounds.

Training for the base-ball contest begins at the university grounds about the middle of February ; the men train within four brick walls, called a base-ball cage. This is fully one hundred and twenty-five feet long, by sixty feet wide ; it has, of course, an earth floor ; it is heated and kept comfortable for the players in the winter-time ; there they get general practice in pitching and practising with grounders. The foot-ball practice goes on continually, in season, regardless of the weather, rain or snow.

All the track men begin light training in the gymnasium after the Christmas holidays. Light training in the gymnasium is kept up every day until about the opening of spring ; then when the weather has become pleasant and the ground solid the men go into hard training for about two months.

When under training the students eat only at the training table, where such food is provided for them as is allowed by their trainer. All fried foods are forbidden ; so are pork and pastries ; no tobacco is used during this time, nor alcoholic drinks ; only two glasses of any liquid are allowed each person at any one meal. The students go to bed early ; half-past ten or eleven o'clock is considered the proper time. From one to three hours are daily required for training, and the length of time depends upon the kind of contest the man is to enter. If the captain discovers that a man is not keeping training, he will immediately expel him from the training table and dismiss him from the team.

In some of the colleges there are rules requiring students to do gymnastic work. The majority of students need no urging, and the gymnasiums are usually full from four to six o'clock.

Golf suits have been adopted by many of the students as their ordinary wear while at school. At all the large colleges the great distinctions in dress of the "Varsity man" (that is, one who has won a point in the inter-collegiate championship track games, or has played in the championship base-ball or foot-ball game, or been on the crew) are the monogram on his cap, and the privilege of wearing the initial letter of his university in the college colors on his sweater. The insignia on the cap indicate whether one is a foot-ball, a base-ball, or a track man : they alone have the privilege of wearing these initials.

The coachers in the large colleges are always graduates or former students of the colleges represented. The trainers are men who are experts in their line, who make a business of training ; some of them have previously been noted athletes.

The men are required by college law to have a standing above a certain grade in their studies before they are permitted to enter the contests. Some of the men during the active season of athletics have been noticed to stand better in their studies than even at other times : this may be attributed to their time being limited, so that they have to concentrate their minds upon their work, as well as to the fact that good physical condition helps the mind.

The spectators at the contests are made up of professors, ladies of the neighborhood, the lady friends and relatives of the students, alumni,

and people from everywhere who are interested in games; and the games are gala scenes generally.

College athletics improve the men physically. They have done away with a great deal of the so-called "sporting." Now that athletics have come in, the students look up to the champion athletes, and enthusiasm over them is unbounded.

College athletics give a discipline and self-mastery that are invaluable. The students who take part persistently in these exercises are taught control of their appetites. The dietary regimen in the training season is strict; the hours for exercise are fixed; the student is taught that indulgence in alcohol or tobacco or other forms of dissipation is fatal to his ambition to excel: self-control is thus impressed early upon him, and his character is strengthened. Particularly in foot-ball, a man who loses his temper is ruled out of the game.

College athletics are a safety-valve. The energies of the students are bound to find an outlet. By the strong exercises of the gymnasiums and of the various games, these energies are naturally called forth: so that the tendency to late hours and to dissipation is largely diminished.

College athletics have generally, as is to be expected, a far more gentlemanly and manly tone than those that may be called professional; furthermore, they are less slangy and "sporty" than they were a few years ago; the whole tendency is away from the rough and tough element, toward manliness and the development of manhood. At the university games, an error of an opponent is no longer applauded or hissed; good plays only are applauded. It used to be the object to "rattle" the opposing team by hooting, but that is now considered "muckerism;" a general gentlemanly spirit prevails.

A great many parents have been frightened by tales of the dangers of foot-ball and other violent games, and they have been fearful lest the gymnastic exercises of their sons at college might have a taint of professionalism; but there is less cause for anxiety in regard to the atmosphere in which college boys live than there was a few years ago. The college tone is now far manlier, cleaner, and more healthful. The hard drinkers and the debauchees are no longer college heroes.

Rough physical exercises are necessary to manliness. Cicero went so far as to justify the gladiatorial combats, on the principle that they diminished the fear of death and made men braver. Few now would agree with him; but it is becoming more and more evident that games and exercises that are rough, and that include even an element of danger, are good for our young men. And, in my opinion, too much cannot be said in favor of college athletics as now in vogue.

Albert Tyler.

TO HIM WHO WAITS.

ALL things may come to him who learns to wait,
But oh the pity when they come too late!

Carrie Blake Morgan.

A FEATHERY DÉBUT.

ONE of our most interesting birds, in regard to his social and family relations, is the common song-thrush,—he of the speckled breast, red-brown wings, and sweeping tail. Intense in all things, the thrush forgets to sing, turns from the joy of air and sunshine, foregoes his right to soar to the tempting white clouds above him, when, having chosen his mate, he builds a nest, installs his spouse, and begins to anticipate the advent of the youngsters over whose welfare he watches with such unswerving solicitude. For several springs, pairs of these fine birds have placed their nests in a tall clump of honeysuckle just on the far side of our garden path, and within easy view of a sheltered porch and a second-story window, from which two points of vantage we have been able to observe, without intruding on the privacy of a creature who resents too much morbid curiosity concerning his personal affairs, with a decision impossible not to respect.

No better spot could have been selected for a sequestered dwelling. The vigorous vine, old and sturdy, completely envelops its original wire support with a net-work of stems and branches, hidden without by thick-leaved, flowering sprays, that form a perfectly water-proof covering, impervious to the heaviest shower. The particular nest of which I am about to speak was, as we discovered afterwards, almost at the top of the clump, near the centre, about seven feet above ground-level, and not visible from any point. The thrush never left the bush at the same place where he entered: whether this was a piece of diplomacy, or whether he could not turn his long body in the labyrinth of stems, I cannot say, but the procedure was certainly misleading. In addition, he had settled in his own mind a "dead-line," within whose limits none were to enter without laying themselves open to something more than mere protest. He really seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, for, though you were sure that he had disappeared in the green recesses of the opposite field, you had only to step on the forbidden ground, and there would be heard a whirr of swift wings, anon a sound as of tearing cloth, and you would be conscious that two bright eyes were watching you closely, and that a sharp beak might become an unpleasant weapon of offence if you transgressed further. And all this was no idle threat, no impotent remonstrance against superior power, for the thrush believes implicitly in his ability to defend himself, and attacks without fear or hesitation.

We were made aware of this fact when a pair of thrushes built in a grape-arbor in close juxtaposition to a large Japanese wineberry-bush. When the fruit of the latter was ripe, and covetous desirers thereof came within a foot or so of the rather exposed domicile, the parents realized their mistake, and were always on the war-path, circling, swirling, hissing, lighting now on the head, now on the shoulders or face of the intruder with bewildering rapidity, pecking vigorously meanwhile, until a retreat suggested itself as an agreeable possibility.

Our honeysuckle thrushes, more safely lodged, more at ease, and therefore larger-minded, never went to such extremes, and, as we were desirous to have them as neighbors, we ventured to take few liberties with their peace of mind.

It happened that during this June nesting the room whose window looked directly on the honeysuckle-bush was occupied by an invalid, who in turn occupied the attention of the family, so that the porch, the path, and the stretch of grass were comparatively deserted, giving pater Thrush more freedom, or fewer interruptions to his domestic labors, than ever before. During the weary weeks of incubation he proved himself a most attentive husband. Up betimes,—no one ever caught him napping,—he kept a tireless watch, a ceaseless provisioning, till darkness gave his weary little body a chance to rest. He did not have far to go for his marketing; silly worms were always to be found in the soft turf, moths of all descriptions abounded, and an ancient cherry-tree cast down its small but juicy berries on the path below.

The sudden activity of the mother-bird told us that the young ones were no longer "eggy possibilities," but positive facts, and the vociferous bursts of sound proceeding from the recesses of the honeysuckle whenever the parents disappeared therein reassured us as to their appetites. What a hungry brood it was! The famed daughter of the horse-leech became a mere circumstance in comparison. But the devoted father simply redoubled his efforts, never wavering, never wearying. A scrutiny from the window would generally find him either balancing himself on a bough opposite, with a couple of worms dangling from his beak, or battering a huge moth as a cook beats a steak, or carefully stoning a cherry, so that the infants should run no risks, and withal always on the alert, quite determined that neither strange bird nor stranger brute should disturb the harmony of his family circle.

All these proceedings we had witnessed before: then, just as our excitement reached its height, we would suddenly become conscious that something had disappeared from our social surroundings; we would watch vainly for the bright-eyed, domineering little creature who had so long "bossed" our lawn, to the exclusion of any other of his kind, till sorrowful investigation revealed the fact that the Thrush family had taken the Frenchiest of leaves, the clean, solidly-built nest remaining as our only consolation. This especial season, however, Paterfamilias felt himself too entirely master of the situation to flit either at sunrise or with any unconventional amount of haste. The morning was quite well advanced when, from the window above, we heard loud cries of lamentation from the honeysuckle-bush, answered by chirpings from below, and on looking out we perceived the old bird hopping back and forth at the foot of the clump, showing some degree of excitement. The cause of his agitation was easily explained, as presently a round bunch of brown feathers appeared high up among the green sprays, and the piercing screams were redoubled when the youngster realized his perilous position and comprehended the abyss which separated him from his affectionate parent. On seeing his timorous offspring, the thrush fluttered away a short distance, caught an

unwary earthworm, and, with it dangling from his beak, continued to hop about on the grass, gradually increasing the line of separation, but still keeping the clump well in view. Meanwhile the youthful and unwilling athlete was painfully progressing towards Mother Earth, tumbling jerkily from one branch to another, clutching now wildly at a leaf, now desperately at a slippery blossom, and pausing occasionally to emit a series of the most heart-rending yells, as the insecure supports trembled beneath him. Suddenly, when about four feet from the ground, gravitation became too much for him; he lost his hold, and, with anything but grace, executed a somersault and landed on the path, there to lie motionless.

Of course we thought he was killed; but pater Thrush, believing otherwise, continued his promenade with perfect *sang-froid*, till, after seconds that seemed hours, the brown ball stumbled to its feet and made a wild rush to the spot where the parent bird was waiting. That adept immediately popped the earthworm down the gaping throat, and then ensued a comical little scene. Pater Thrush would fly away, leaving the baby to howl in despair, then reappear a yard or so farther off, with an edible morsel in his beak, upon which the infant would go scrambling in pursuit, vainly trying to balance itself on its stilt-like legs, and eventually reaching its protector, who fed it, and again retreated hastily, thus coaxing the small creature quite across the lawn, when a sheltering grape arbor hid them both from view. From the loud chirping which greeted their advent, it seemed evident that the mother, with a young one whose *début* we had not witnessed, was awaiting the arrival with great anxiety.

No sooner was baby safe under her charge than the father flew back to the honeysuckle, from whose recesses, fired off at intervals like so many minute-guns, came the sharp remonstrances of the deserted nestlings, consigned to temporary oblivion during the excitement of the moment. He crept in as usual, emerged shortly, and stationed himself as before at the foot of the clump, till another fluffy individual, the very moral, as a Kelt would say, of his brother, appeared on the outer branches, full of the same doubts and trepidations, all of which were patiently listened to by the affectionate parent, whose line of action was clearly predetermined and unalterable. This time the entrance into the world was made without any thrilling adventures, with fewer blood-curdling shrieks and much more *aplomb*: by careful degrees, swinging himself from one spray to another with considerable dexterity, the young thrush descended to the ground with scarcely a slip. Rewarded by the presentation of a lively worm, he was then convoyed across the grass as had been his brother; being of a bolder temperament, less time was consumed in the procedure. He was soon under his mother's chaperonage, and again the father-bird returned to his onerous duties.

Then occurred a hitch in the proceedings, so to speak; an interruption unlooked for by audience or actors. The youngest performer in this little scene of domestic life utterly refused to appear before the foot-lights or play the part assigned to him by Nature and race tradition. Vainly did Thrush Senior creep in and out of the bush, sometimes

with food, sometimes without, or hop impatiently to and fro on the grass beneath, uttering an occasional vexed chirp; the infant phenomenon would not so much as show the tip of his obstinate small beak outside the thick green curtain behind which he had passed his secluded and well-stuffed babyhood. The old thrush, in evident agitation, fluttered from one end of the lawn to the other, then perched himself on his favorite "thinking branch" and appeared to review the situation with great earnestness. The only result of his labors, however, was that he flew away, leaving us deeply distressed at his heartless abandonment of the erring one, who every now and then gave vent to a pitiful cry, which grew fainter and fainter as the afternoon wore on and hope became a thing of the past. A good deal of chirping from the "hollow," where the lawn sloped hastily downward and the grass grew thick and high about the low-boughed old pear- and apple-trees, seemed to intimate that the major portion of the interesting family had retired for the night,—a night that would be fraught with countless dangers for the youthful *débutants*.

We held a sympathetic symposium over the lonely nestling, but a sort of unspoken faith in our friend Thrush, and some experience of his *noli me tangere* disposition, bade us withhold our hands; yet the feeble cries issuing at intervals from the clump made us feel very uncomfortable, and we truly rejoiced when, about sunset time, a familiar form flitted across the lawn and perched itself on the branch opposite, branch and bird both making the prettiest silhouette possible against the amber-colored sky. Our friend's agitation seemed to have passed off; he was not in the least moved by the whimpers coming from the baby in the honeysuckle-bush, and in fact the masculine calmness with which he reviewed each feather in his big handsome body exasperated us to a degree; but, as usual, he attended strictly to his own business, and paid no heed to outside opinion. When his toilet was arranged to his complete satisfaction, he hopped about on the grass till he had secured a fair-sized, dilatory worm, with whom, to our immense relief, he proceeded to his old home. The feeble cry from the nest swelled to a healthy crescendo; the invisible moribund became interested once more in life, and was rewarded for its persistency by a hearty meal, at whose conclusion the faithful parent disappeared in the recesses of the vine, whence, as far as our careful observation went, he emerged no more.

The next morning the nest was empty; so it was evident that the truant had been brought to reason; and not until they were nicely tailed and feathered, and able to "spread their sails" at a commendable height, did we again see our interesting young friends; though the parent birds, in the mean time, often came to fish for worms on the lawn, to which they felt they had some proprietary rights.

It cannot be denied that our respect for our thrush was decidedly increased by this exhibition on his part of intelligence *versus* instinct. It can scarcely be supposed that he was prepared for the emergency which the obstinacy of his offspring brought about, yet he met it with a reasoning forbearance hardly to be expected from a creature so bound by tradition and inheritance. But the thrush seems by nature a cool-headed, independent bird, whose courage shows itself in a placidity

curiously opposed to the angry timidity of his neighbor with us, the catbird, who, though a solicitous and careful parent, resents the approach of an enemy to his nest mainly by impotent noises and vexed flutterings overhead. It is not improbably the most agitating moment in a bird's life when he brings his young from their nursery, knowing quite well their weakness and the dangers which threaten them on every hand. Our thrush must have felt indeed secure of his surroundings before he would venture to debark his small crew so late in the day, in such a leisurely manner, and with a seeming disregard of all dangerous possibilities. We thanked him very heartily for this charming glimpse into his domestic ways, for a prettier sight could not have graced our lawn: the tender cunning of the father-bird, his patient firmness, the decision with which he carried out his prearranged plan of action, contrasted with the terror of the young ones,—a terror mingled with perfect confidence, and a dawning comprehension that they were being called upon to share in the endless struggle for existence which was taking place around them, and from which they had until that moment been so successfully sheltered.

Lalage D. Morgan.

SPANISH PLAINS AND SIERRAS.

TRULY the old chroniclers of Spain, Irving, Hare, and Gautier, who traversed its dusty highways with the diligencia and crossed its sierras on mule-back, saw its people and nature to much better purpose than modern railway travellers possibly can. Yet, with all they have to say of art, architecture, and other interesting things, they warn the would-be Spanish tourist that on the great panorama of Spanish landscape he will find few beauty-spots.

Now it is to just the opposite conclusion that four months' knocking about Spanish turnpikes, mountain-tops, and cities with a cycle has brought me.

Shortly before going there, I asked a woman who had travelled extensively in Spain if the country was really as desolate as many people made it out. Her answer was an emphatic yes, followed by the remark that in her long railway journeys she recalled chiefly the hours and hours of riding over cheerless wastes.

Wastes there are, and many miles of them, and barren peaks, and countless crests of them, but I cannot relive a single long day's run in either North or South Spain and not remember at least one spot or stretch where all the tender notes of mother Nature had been attuned by the presiding goddess of beauty.

Such a *motif* comes suddenly, and is evanescent, like a gorgeous bird upon a leafless tree; a lift of the wings, and the bird has flown, leaving the unsightly tree. So our beauty-spot, even if we stop to memorize it with the eye, has but a fleeting charm, and again we roll on over the monotone of plain. But we have had it, and it has made the day joyous. In what did it consist? Perhaps in the descent

from a treeless height upon a sunlit *huerta* of golden oranges and blood-red pomegranates. Beyond its narrow confines begin the sand-hills and the rusty fields of stubble, but meantime we have seen the garden that might serve as paradise for the Adam and Eve of a modern French or German impressionist. Indeed, I am not sure that it would not be well for the *fin-de-siècle* painter, who seems to take particular delight in this well-worn theme, to draw upon Spain for the trysting-place of his first couple, rather than upon his own imagination.

Beauty in the landscape of Iberia is concentrated ; the lovely picture is the episode rather than the general dietary of a day's ride in most parts, although there are notable exceptions where for miles one's road threads continued scenes of loveliness and grandeur. But in typical Spain the roadway does not intersect valleys every inch of which is cultivated, as in France and North Italy, or cross mountains vineyarded to their summits. And—shall I say it ?—it is grander and a thousand times more soul-satisfying to cross the sunburned sweeps between Avila and Salamanca than to travel over the tilled Lombardian level, where never for a moment is one alone with Nature or free from the presence of the thrifty peasant.

After a last glance at the grand battlements that so perfectly protect historic Avila, a lonely land is entered, enlivened only here and there by villages as low-toned in color as the country that surrounds them. The round hills rambling to the right vary in height, but more in light ; and herein lies a charm of Spain. Some are so tinged with iron that they flash like necklaces of the rich brown diamonds so much the fashion of to-day ; others, covered with a blue heather common in North Spain, rise azure-robed in the full glare of noonday sun towards the Castilian sky they reflect. A third band, of lilliputian proportions and topaz tone, slope lower until lost in the wavy plain.

Sometimes the hard white road, passing fields of undulating grain guarded by stray peasants enjoying the noonday siesta, dips suddenly to a green river half overgrown with reeds and sentinelled with shimmering olives or poplars, that disappears between drab hillocks through which it runs its limpid course. The streams are not always beautiful, but they are picturesque and eminently Spanish.

Castile is left, and before reaching Salamanca a high plateau is passed, the seething sands of which stretch on the right until they appear to meet a long range of snow mountains. These are the alpine outposts of Portugal ; and so transparent is the air that it seems as if with a reach of the arm one could span the table-land of Leon and cool one's hands upon the glistening sierras.

And then, as chief *motif* of the day, combining the interesting, beautiful, and picturesque as only Spanish towns do, Salamanca the stagnant, the lazy, glowing in June sunshine, crowns the placid Tormes.

A long, low, massive bridge, half Roman, half mediæval, like those of Toledo and Cordova, preludes this town of the hill-top. Above the smooth river, on the banks of which washerwomen idly slap their clothes, the domes of the new and old cathedrals, epitomes of the simple and the adorned in ecclesiastical structures, tower in clustered

beauty, while the great buff walls of the half-empty university and colleges add to the grand galaxy their notes on civic architecture.

The beauty of the Spanish landscape cannot be composed only of valleys, mountains, and rivers, for, in a land where history plays so important a part, bridges, Roman aqueducts, and picturesque cities furnish minor chords without which the great natural harmonies would remain incomplete.

Fanny Bullock Workman.

VERSES.

DRIVE me not hence ; mine is a world of shadows,
Whilst thine is peopled with the shapes of day.
Let me lie here within the effulgent circle
Thy sunshine throws across my empty way.

Thou wast created for these radiant gardens
Which bathe thy forehead in their fragrant breath ;
Immortal summer wreathes thy feet with garlands,
While mine have faltered in the realms of death.

Upon thy lips the joy of life still utters
Sweet foolish words, the secrets of thy soul.
I ask not much, only to list thy chidings ;
Dumb, to look up and find sufficient dole.

Push me not back into the gloomy twilight
Which until now has always been my part.
Give to my thirst from out the golden chalice,
My full-blown rose, thou bearest in thy heart.

Thou art so rich, and I so poor beside thee—
Bend rosy warmth a moment to my cold !
“I am afraid,” the poet sang before me,
“For thou art beautiful and I am old.”

Say not again we both have done with springtide ;
Who cares for dawn that once has tasted noon ?
Why should I fear ? touch but my frozen heart-strings
And feel them shiver in a rapturous swoon.

Youth comes once more, the glory and the fever
Of those wild dreams with which I fretted fate.
I have found light. Cast me not out to darkness !
Kill me ! but tell me not it is too late.

Julien Gordon.

TEACUP TIMES.

THE earliest mention of tea by an Englishman is probably that contained in a letter from Mr. Wickham, an agent of the East India Company, written from Firando in Japan on the 27th of June, 1615, to Mr. Eaton, another officer of the Company, resident at Macao, asking him to send "a pot of the best *chaw*." In Mr. Eaton's accounts of expenditure occurs this item: "Three silver porringers to drink *chaw* in."

It was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that the English began to use tea. The first importations were from Java, and the price ranged from six to ten pounds per pound. In the *Mercurius Politicus* of September, 1658, appears the following advertisement: "That excellent and by all Physitians approved China Drink, called by the Chineans Tcha, by other nations Tay, or Tea, is sold at the Sultaness Head, a cophee-house in Sweetings Rents, by the Royal Exchange, London."

Pepys enters in his Diary on the 25th of September, 1660, "I did send for a cup of tee, a China drink, of which I had never drunk before." This is a proof of the novelty of the drink in England at that date.

In 1664 it is recorded that the East India Company presented the king with two pounds and two ounces of "thea."

About this time, however, the consumption of tea and coffee became fashionable, and the importations large in proportion.

About the first quarter of the seventeenth century began what Tennyson called

The teacup times of hood and hoop,
And when the patch was worn.

An innocent little couplet, but full of suggestion. It conjures up a vision of fair dames in square-cut and scanty bodices, satin petticoats, and "monstrous fardingales," high coiffures drawn up over huge cushions, powdered hair, and cheeks ornamented with curiously devised patches. Not less brilliant in attire were the attendant beaux in divers-colored wide-skirted coats, embroidered waistcoats, lace ruffles, and powdered queues.

The spelling and pronunciation of the word "tea" seem not yet to have been settled. Dryden says,—

And thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tay.

So Pope pronounced it; so did Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; so did Mr. Pepys and his friends; and so, it seems, did Mr. Spectator. They probably used the French pronunciation.

In 1657 tea had become so customary a beverage among the higher

classes that Thomas Garraway, the first English tea-dealer, received a large consignment of it, which he sold at his house in the City. By this time the public coffee-houses had become recognized places of meeting for men of letters. The literature of the day is full of allusions to them, and their establishment is coeval with the first appearance of periodical literature in England.

The "Tatler" and the "Spectator" were the offspring of coffee-house chat and gossip, and many of their contributions were dated from these resorts.

Women, of course, were excluded from the coffee-houses, but they organized "tea-drinkings," as they were called, to which both men and women flocked. Fancy such a company assembled in a fine lady's boudoir, sipping fragrant Hyson from handleless cups of egg-shell china, while Pope and Lady Mary sparred at each other, or Pepys retailed the latest news,—what marriages were in prospective, or who at the last drawing-room had been adjudged the reigning beauty. At such a time, when Swift lived at St. James's and lay in bed to compose, because the nights were cold and coals dear, he may have discussed Gay's death with Pope over a cup of tea. It was from such "tea-drinkings" that the witty and erratic Dean gathered much of the materials for his "Journal to Stella."

With the fashion of tea-parties was developed the taste for china. The more grotesque and unusual the pattern and design, the more valuable the teacup.

Quaint, humorous Charles Lamb thought the subject worthy an essay, his "Old China" being a reflex of the public mind on the matter. Speaking of the designs on the teacups, he says,—

"I like to see my old friends, whom distance cannot diminish, figuring up in the air (as they appear to our optics), yet on terra-firma still, for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, has made to spring up beneath their sandals. Here is a young and courtly mandarin handing tea on a salver to a lady two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another,—for likeness is identity on teacups,—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which, in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world), must infallibly land her in the middle of a flowery mead, a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream."

Throughout the "Spectator" and the "Tatler" allusions to tea-parties and china abound on almost every page. At these gatherings the fine gentlemen read their poems and essays to the fair dames, who pronounced upon their merits. Fancy Pope asserting at a tea-party that "most women have no characters at all." Certainly during these times women made their *début* as authors,—Mrs. Aphra Behn, Mrs. Manley, Fanny Burney, the Countess of Winchelsea, and a host of others.

Dr. Samuel Johnson's partiality for tea, and his immense capacity for imbibing it, are well known, and perhaps gave rise to the prevailing idea that tea and scandal go hand in hand, for the Doctor,

in spite of his polysyllabic words and long sentences, was an arrant gossip.

Crabbe writes,—

The gentle fair on nervous tea relies,
Whilst gay good nature sparkles in her eyes;
An inoffensive scandal fluttering round,
Too rough to tickle, and too light to wound.

One of the contributors to the "Spectator" writes thus :

"Mr. Spectator, your paper is a part of my tea equipage, and my servant knows my humor so well, that, calling for my breakfast this morning (it being past my usual hour), she answered, the Spectator was not yet come in, but that the teakettle boiled, and she expected it every minute."

Another essay of the period gives an account of a lady's boudoir. The fair occupant was much given to tea and literature, which in her mind were so closely allied that her teacups were used to separate the quartos from the folios, the octavos being bounded by dishes in divers colors and shapes. The writer felt awe and admiration for the lady on perceiving among the books on her table "Locke on the Human Understanding," but his sentiments, he remarks, were changed when he found, on opening the volume, that it served as a depository for the lady's patches.

Pope, in one of his satires, praises the woman who is

Mistress of herself, though china fall.

And Prior, in describing the engagements of a lady of quality in his day, says she

Slipt sometimes around to Mrs. Shody's
To cheapen tea, to buy a screen.

Physicians tell us that tea is injurious to the nervous system. At the time of its introduction into Europe much opposition was provoked and much written in hostility to its use. Mr. Henry Savile writes in 1678 to his uncle, Mr. Secretary Coventry, in sharp reproof of certain friends who call for tea after dinner, instead of the bottle. He calls it "a base Indian practice, which I must ever admire your Christian family for not admitting." Another writer, at about the same date, calls it "a filthy custom," and adds, "Men seem to lose their stature and comeliness, and women their beauty."

Dr. Samuel Johnson drew his own portrait as "a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who for twenty years diluted his meals with the infusion of this fascinating plant, whose kettle had scarcely time to cool; who with tea amused the evening, with tea solaced the midnight, and with tea welcomed the morning." So the great Doctor could have feared no ill effects.

Experience proves that the moderate use of tea sustains the body under severe muscular strain without causing subsequent exhaustion; and it forms an agreeable means of imbibing the quantity of water necessary to human nutrition.

Frances M. Butler.

"TO HIM THAT HATH."

MRS. AMANDA HEMINGWAY MASON gave a satisfied glance about the room: she assured herself once more that all was in readiness. There were the tables and the chairs, the pens and the ink, the stamps, the patent envelope moisteners, the Social Register, and, last of all, to which her eyes turned in fond pride, the neat piles of daintily printed pamphlets,—the Appeals upon which were pinned the hopes of the West-Side Exchange for Gentlewomen,—the Appeals that were to magnetize the dollars from the pockets of the very misers.

Mrs. Amanda Hemingway Mason, the president of the society, certainly had every right to feel satisfied, for she had been a committee of one to attend to the preparation of these Appeals. Not only had the florid sketch of the society's rise and progress emanated from her pen, and the many-sided and irrefragable arguments for its continued support, but to her sense of the fitness of things were due the size of the pamphlet, the width of the margin, the appearance of the cover, the selection of the type, and the color of the ink. Not a single detail of workmanship had escaped her eye. In the thousand and one little matters that constantly arose between her and the printer, she had felt a delicious and novel thrill. She had always cherished secret ambitions in a literary way. In the correction of the proofs (both galley and paged) there had been vouchsafed her a breath of the divine afflatus.

And now at last the great work was done: the little books were ranged in orderly piles and lay ready to be slipped into their envelopes and sent abroad upon their triumphant mission. Each bore the magnificent title (done with a discreet variation of red and black ink):

AN APPEAL TO THE BENEVOLENT OF THE METROPOLIS.**AN ACCOUNT OF THE WORK AND NEEDS****OF THE****WEST-SIDE EXCHANGE FOR GENTLEWOMEN.**

Mrs. Mason was fingering one of the pamphlets with pardonable pride, when the door-bell rang, and the secretary of the society entered, prepared for work. "Have they come?" she asked, anxiously. The president nodded towards the pile. The secretary took one up. "Oh, how pretty they are! They will be quite irresistible."

The rest of the Board entered shortly in groups of twos and threes, and at last all were settled down to work earnestly in directing the

envelopes. The sound of many pens scratching away merrily was broken only now and then by a laughing remark or spicy bit of personality.

"Mrs. Melrose Montagu? H'm!" exclaimed one. "Must be a pretty stirring appeal to move her."

"Better sprinkle some grated onions in to draw her tears," laughed another.

"Mrs. Bemas Burns," said the secretary. "Oh, what's the use? We've sent her appeals every year, and we have never got one cent from her, though she's as rich as Croesus."

Mentally the president corrected, "But not *this* Appeal."

"Why, yes," some one answered. "We really should send her a bill for postage, we have wasted so many stamps on her."

The afternoon passed by, interrupted only by the appearance of the little maid with bread and butter and tea. "There's one thing," remarked the president, with a sigh of satisfaction: "I'm sure there are no mistakes. If there's one thing I hate more than another, it's typographical errors. To begin with, there's no excuse for them, as a skilful proof-reader should correct them. And, besides, there's something so cruel, so irrevocable, about them."

"Yes," chimed in the treasurer; "no amount of apologizing can ever make up for them."

"I see you have Miss Smythe with the final *e*," said the vice-president. The president smiled her contentment.

"And Mrs. Zerbolotzki will smile with pleasure to see herself for once correctly spelled," said some one.

"That's worth about fifty dollars to us alone," replied another. The president beamed.

At six o'clock the ladies left. Two of them drove off to the branch post-office in the neighborhood to deposit the Appeals safely, and the president was left alone with the great task accomplished.

That night Mrs. Mason had not been in bed ten minutes before a terrible thought struck chill to her veins. "It can't be possible!" she exclaimed, yet rose instantly, donned her wrapper, and went to the parlor in order to make sure. There she lit the gas and seized one of the pamphlets. Turning the pages rapidly to the treasurer's report, she eagerly glanced down the columns of figures, and was turned to stone. Some dreadful mistake of the printer (this time she did not accuse the proof-reader) had placed a sum of twenty-one thousand dollars in the wrong column, and, instead of showing a deficit of that amount, had made it appear as if the society had twenty-one thousand dollars more than was needed for current expenses.

What could be done? All that money spent in vain; all that time wasted; all that eloquence! It was cruel. And, more serious even than all that, an institution on the verge of bankruptcy was bringing itself to the attention of everybody as a successful, well-supported enterprise of philanthropy. Of course it was hopeless now to expect a single answer to the Appeal. No one was going to waste a dollar on a society with twenty-one thousand dollars more in the treasury than it needed. The distracted president paced up and down in agony.

Oh, how could he? How could he? Had she not explained so elaborately, and copied it all so carefully, that this twenty-one thousand dollars was only a loan and had been paid back every penny last year? Oh, dear! It was ridiculous to expect any one to study it all out and add and subtract in order to find out the exact situation. No, there was no help for it; it would go abroad that the West-Side Exchange for Gentlewomen was in excellent financial condition, and not a helping hand would be stretched out to them,—not one. She had heard people speak of printers' devils: well, they were rightly named. Oh, *wouldn't* she go down the next morning! *wouldn't* she! But what could she do? No amount of scolding would ever change the dismal situation. The mischief was done. Not a penny would come to them from the beloved Appeals. There was only one honorable course to pursue. She must put her hand into her pocket and pay for the expense of printing. That would be thirty dollars. And then there was the postage, one thousand distributed with two-cent stamps because they had thought first-class matter was more dignified. That would be twenty dollars. Fifty dollars in all, from a widow's slender purse.

Poor Mrs. Mason went back to her bed, but not to sleep. As long as the night was, it was not long enough, for the dread grew upon her of being obliged to face her colleagues after the dreadful error should be known.

She remained at home all the morning, waiting for a ring of the door-bell that never came. At noon the postman's whistle aroused her, and she went to the door herself to take the mail from him. There were three letters, which she tore open in nervous haste.

The first was from Mrs. Benas Burns.

"I am so delighted to read," it ran, "of your *great* success. I see you have twenty-one thousand dollars surplus in the treasury. Isn't it delightful? I have long put off becoming a member. You may put me down now as a patron at twenty-five dollars a year, and having kept you waiting so long I really feel that I owe you the enclosed check for one hundred dollars to make up for my dilatoriness."

The second was from Mrs. Melrose Montagu.

"I enclose a check for five hundred dollars," she wrote, "for your magnificent and successful work. It gives me such pleasure to know that you are getting on so well. If nothing happens, I shall be glad to repeat this subscription next year and the year after that. I am going to get my mother and my sister both to be patrons, for certainly you deserve the support of all thinking women."

And the third was from the treasurer:

"I hear on all sides nothing but praise for the beautiful Appeal. We shall succeed, thanks to your skill and devotion. I rush to my desk to let you know that I met our funny old neighbor Mr. Wintry this morning, and he says he was much pleased with our report, and hints that he may have one of his houses in the neighborhood for us rent-free. Don't say anything yet; but isn't it touching how the people are coming forward at last?"

Annie Nathan Meyer.

FIREPLACES OF SNOW.

AT the first glance, snow does not look like a very promising material for a fireplace, and yet I think I am not mistaken in saying that every winter there are hundreds of fires built in fireplaces made of this substance. This is less surprising when we stop to think that in the part of America where this is done the temperature outdoors during the winter months seldom rises as high as zero, and frequently falls as low as forty or fifty degrees below.

About the end of January, or when the sun again appears above the horizon, many families at the two Eskimo villages near Point Barrow, in Alaska, leave their winter houses and travel inland seventy-five or one hundred miles to hunt reindeer along the upper waters of the large rivers that flow into the Arctic Ocean east of the point. Here they encamp in large, comfortable snow houses, usually dug out in a solid snow-drift. Like all Eskimo winter houses, these are entered by means of a long, low tunnel ; and opening out of one side of this tunnel there is a fireplace built of snow slabs.

I never had a chance to go out to the rivers with the deer-hunters ; but one winter there was a snow fireplace built in the Cape Smyth village, near our station.

A young man and his wife moved down from Point Barrow after winter had set in, and, as there was no accommodation for them in any of the permanent wooden houses, they built themselves a small hut from blocks of snow and roofed it over with sailcloth. I made them a visit one afternoon, and found the house pretty cold and uncomfortable in spite of the large stone lamp that was burning all the time. The entrance tunnel was about ten feet long : at the left hand as you entered, and close to the door, was the fireplace. This was about two and a half feet square, and neatly built of slabs of snow, with a smoke-hole at the top and a stick stuck across at the proper height to hang a pot on. When the first fire is built in such a fireplace, there is considerable melting of the surface of the snow, but as soon as the fire is allowed to go out this freezes to a hard glaze of ice, which afterwards melts only a very little. These fireplaces are used only for cooking, as the Eskimos rely wholly on the oil lamps for warming the dwelling.

John Murdoch.

SUMMER MORNING.

AT GLOW in the crimson clover,
A laugh in the bubbling spring,
The flower-decked sod is a gift from God,
There is joy in everything.

Grace F. Pennypacker.

A YANKEE FARMER IN FLORIDA.

IN the pioneer days of South Florida there came from Boston a man named Dave, with his wife and two children.

He came, he said, primarily for his health, and incidentally to better his fortune, which, never having been great, had been wrecked in the financial cyclone of '73.

In those days homesteads donated by a paternal government to actual settlers were plenty, and Dave soon found one to his liking, on which he built a cabin and cleared land for a small orange grove.

With a fine disregard for conventionalities and Boston prejudices, and with a determination to be "of the Romans a Roman," he discarded shoes, stockings, and all superfluities of dress, and commenced work with magnificent pluck and Yankee energy.

Looking to a bread-supply for the immediate future, he rented a few acres of arable land from an "old residenter" to plant in corn and potatoes, his new land being sour and unfit; and he invested the remnant of his funds in a horse, plough, and harness.

The horse was an importation from the broad plains of Texas, small, angular, slender of limb, and wild of eye. An animal with better training or ancestors or habits of thought ought to have been selected, for Dave had never owned a horse in his life, nor had he ever mounted one or "put his hands to a plough."

He knew it was all quite easy, though. Did ever a man come from "Bosting" who couldn't do anything that any other man had ever done?

The day after the purchase, in the early, dewy morn, he took the horse, plough, and harness to the rented field to begin operations, and his wife and children went along to see the inception of that happy occupation called "farming."

Never having harnessed a horse, Dave omitted that useful article, a collar, and buckled on the hames upside down; but otherwise he got the gearing fixed in pretty fair shape.

Then, taking the lines and grasping the plough-handles with a grip of determination, he uttered, with fine effect and deep bass voice, a formula he'd read,—in the encyclopædia, perhaps,—"Gee! Whoa! Haw! Git up thar!"

The formula was all right, and his rendering perfect; but he hadn't taken into account the moods and tenses, past and present, of a Texas pony. That sagacious animal, having taken a slight tug against the bare, upside-down hames, stood gazing back in silent wonder and expectancy.

"Come up, there, I tell you!" said the farmer. "Can't you gee haw?"

The only answer was a slight bobbing of the head.

"Come up, I tell you!" again said Dave, and at the same time, raising his right hand, he brought the heavy rope line down along the pony's back with a resounding thwack.

His answer was a quart or so of earth full in the face, thrown by the pony's hind feet as they went skyward. That little performance ended, the pony resumed his original position and look of inquiry, while Dave took a seat on the ground to review the situation.

"I don't exactly know what's the matter, Sadie," he said. "The man I got this beast from said he was an elegant plough animal and would go straight along."

"Well, Dave," said Sadie, "I don't know, but seems to me horses may have their regular habits just like people, and maybe this horse ain't used to starting so early in the morning: you know the people round here don't start to work near so early as this. Let's wait a bit, and maybe he'll go."

"Sadie," said Dave, "if we're going to make a crop this year we'll have to start early in the mornings. All good farmers do, and this horse had just as well begin now as another time. I tell you what I expect is the matter: he's used to having a boy lead him when drawing a plough: that's the way lots of ploughing is done. You try leading him, Sadie, and I'll hold the plough."

"Oh, Dave," she said, "I really couldn't. I'm afraid he'd bite me, he looks so mad."

"Shucks!" said Dave. "He couldn't bite you if he wanted to, for the traces and plough will hold him back. You really must, Sadie. Just try it till we get him started, then maybe he'll go all right."

Thus urged, Sadie took the bridle-reins as far in front as she could, and Dave resumed the handles of the plough.

"Now, pull, Sadie," said Dave, "and we'll start. Get up there, you beast!"

In response the beast gave a snort and tug that made Sadie jump ten feet or more and dragged the plough perhaps six inches; then he stopped resolutely.

"I'll tell you what's the matter, Sadie," said Dave: "he ain't used to your skirts. Here, you come hold the plough, and I'll lead him a bit."

So Sadie took the plough-handles, and Dave, taking hold of the bridle, said, "Now come right along, you ugly beast, you!" at the same time giving him a kick.

There was another start and sudden tug; the plough catching on a root, the handles flew up and knocked the luckless Sadie into a sitting position several yards away; the pony stopped, and rested.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" said Dave. "But I tell you, Sadie, I know it can be done, and, what's more, if we're to have anything to eat next winter, it's got to be done. I wonder what ails the beast." And he sat down to think it out.

Presently he said, "I'll tell you what's the matter, Sadie: funny I didn't think of it before. He's used to having somebody ride him when he's working, and he don't know how to go without. You always see these Crackers riding their horses when they're drawing a cart, and I guess it's the same way with ploughing. Now, you just take hold of the handles again, and I'll try riding him, and I guess we'll make it all right."

"Oh, Dave," said Sadie, "I've just had all the breath knocked out of me, and I don't want to again."

"There's no danger, Sadie," said Dave. "Being on his back, I can manage him better, and we'll go carefully; besides, you needn't lean over the plough like you did; just walk far back and stick your arms out, and you'll be safe enough."

Thus persuaded, Sadie again essayed the task, and Dave, jumping astride the beast and jobbing his heels into its flanks, said, "Now get up, sir, get up!"

He got up a little in the rear quarters, quite as much as a pony of his size could with two hundred and fifty pounds avoirdupois on his back; he grunted and snorted, but forward he did not go an inch. Dave said, "You speak to him, Sadie; you're driving now."

And Sadie said, "Get up, pony! get up, you dear little fellow!" As before, he got up with his hind feet just as far as he could, but his forefeet remained fixed and stationary.

Again remarking, "I'll be jiggered!" Dave dismounted, and, taking a seat on the ground, put on his thinking-cap.

The result of his meditation was this:

"Sadie, I'm too heavy for him, that's what's the matter; he's been used to having a boy or Cracker man ride him, and you never saw a Cracker that weighed anything to speak of. I'll tell you what, Sadie; you must ride him, and I'll hold the plough. Strange I didn't think of that before. It'll be fun for you, and I'm sure we'll get right along."

"Oh, Dave, Dave," said Sadie, "I do want to help you all I can, but really and truly I can't do that, you know; there's no saddle, and I'd be scared to death."

"Sadie," said Dave, "you've got to get used to being a farmer's wife, and you'd just as well begin right now. There isn't a particle of danger; with your light weight he'll move right off, smooth and easy; and, really, it's our only chance, you know, for something to eat next winter."

Sadie, with a fine regard for her promise to love, honor, and obey, said a silent prayer, allowed herself to be lifted on the pony, and with trembling hands grasped the reins as she was instructed.

Then Dave, holding the plough, urged the pony to go; but go he wouldn't.

"Kick him, Sadie! Kick him!" cried Dave, and Sadie kicked and kicked again, but the beast only backed and snorted.

Dave's stock of patience was getting exhausted, and he said, "You just wait a minute, Sadie. I'll get a switch and persuade him a little."

So he cut down a small oak sapling, about ten feet high, trimmed off the leaves and twigs, and, taking a stand back of the pony, at right angles to the plough, said, "Now look out, Sadie! I think he'll start." And he brought his "switch" down with all his force across the pony's back.

He started; there could be no question about that. The plough was jerked high in the air, and the next instant the pony was flying across the field with poor Sadie clinging frantically to the hames.

When he reached the rail fence on the far side of the field he went right on over, like a trained hunter; but, the plough catching on the near side, he was jerked back by the traces and came down on his haunches on the other side, while Sadie went on and on in a series of remarkable somersaults.

When Dave reached the spot, the pony was sitting, and so was Sadie, but at some distance apart.

"Sadie, dear!" he exclaimed, "are you hurt?"

"I don't know, Dave," she said, "but it appears as if I'm considerably shook up."

"Well, you just wait a minute till I fix this beast," said Dave; and, taking a broken fence-rail, he brought it down with all his might across the top of the pony's head, knocking it limp and senseless.

"Oh, Dave," said Sadie, looking around just then, "you've killed him!"

"I don't care if I have," said Dave. "If he won't plough he'd better be dead, and save his feed. Anyhow, Sadie, I'm done with farming. Anybody that wants to can plough; I don't."

Sadie approved the resolution, her ambition to be a farmer's wife having cooled considerably. Dave shouldered the plough and gear, and they wended their way homeward, leaving the pony for dead.

Texas ponies, however, are tough, and this one "came to" some time during the day, and wandered home in time for supper. He proved a capital saddle animal, and, having eschewed ploughing, Dave became a hunter, and sold venison to buy flour.

R. G. Robinson.

FROM THE GRAND STAND.

THE sun was shining brilliantly, the wind was blowing gently across the downs, and the air was freshly balmy. In fact, all that Nature could do to show her feeling of entire responsibility she was doing. For it was Derby day at a Kentucky race-track. The grand stand was packed with women in bright dresses and men in clothes slightly accentuated in cut and color,—a handsome, laughing throng, which the excitement of the day permitted to be pronounced and frankly gay. The band clashed out its own version of the popular airs, with a joyous disregard of discord; but nobody minded that in the least.

It was a holiday-minded crowd, taking its gains and its losses with equal good humor. For everybody had something at stake,—much or little, as the case might be; and the feminine two-dollar pool was of as infinite an interest to its holder as the masculine ticket of a hundred times its value.

Down-stairs the crowd was more business-like. The betting-sheds were a seething mass of men, who pushed and yelled, fought their way, but always good-naturedly, threw down their money, and clutched the tickets thrust out to them. Within their boxes stood the men of fate, the pool-sellers, shouting hoarsely above the howling mob below them,

but shouting with the calmness of custom. Intense excitement showed itself on every face, and here and there white lips and fierce eyes told their own story, for two races had already been run that day. But nobody stopped to see that sort of thing, for the time grew short. The saddling-bell rang; the crowd surged out and made a rush for the seats.

The great event, the Derby, was at hand. The horses were brought in,—beautiful, slender, nervous creatures, almost human in their eagerness for the contest. The sight of them thrilled the enormous crowd as one man. Then the favorite appeared, with his famous jockey soothing and restraining him, cautious of his strength, taking the applause of the people with indifference, caring for nothing on the wide earth but the race before him.

Slowly and with much difficulty the horses were gathered at the half-mile post, for the race was a long one. Seven false starts; the eighth, and they are off. The red flag drops; the chatter of talk stops. The horses come round the turn and sweep up the stretch. The grand stand rises to its feet and stays there. They pass, the favorite well to the front and going easily, and a shout of welcome and tremendous passion breaks the air. On they go, straining every nerve; and the crowd holds its breath. It seems an hour before the quarter-mile post is reached. The half-mile post—what is it? For the fraction of a second they falter; the dust rises in a heavy cloud, and it is very far away; only an instant, and they sweep on. Down the home-stretch they come, and again that mighty shout greets them, and pierces the very blue of heaven. They pass, the favorite well to the front and going easily. The Kentucky Derby is won. For a little while the grand stand sees nothing. But away round on the other side of the field a dead horse is being dragged aside, and the stable-boys are carrying a dead man off the track.

Jean Wright.

NEW YORK'S FIRST POET.

IN the year 1861 the brothers Giunta d'Albani printed at the Hague, "for private distribution," a pamphlet bearing the following title: "Jacob Steendam, noch vaster; A Memoir of the First Poet in New Netherland, with his Poems Descriptive of the Colony." Copies of this interesting publication are exceedingly rare. The following quotations from the book are taken from a pamphlet dated at The Hague, March 1, 1861, and sent by C. Murphy, Minister from the United States to Holland, to the late Senator Preston King, of Ogdensburg, New York.

A miscellaneous volume of old placards and proclamations of the States-General was sold at auction at The Hague in 1860. Bound up with a good deal of worthless matter was a sheet of verses on New Amsterdam, signed "Jacob Steendam, noch vaster." The verses consisted of a lamentation over the neglect the new settlement had experienced at the hands of the mother city of Amsterdam. It was found, upon

examination, that the poem was written by a colonist, and had been sent to the parental city for publication.

So far as can be ascertained, Jacob Steendam's verses were the first attempt at poetry made in what are now the States of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. The author was not altogether unknown to fame in his native country, and his name is duly registered in the anthology of Holland among the four thousand Dutch poets whose works are found in print.

Jacob Steendam was born in 1616. The place of his birth is uncertain. Various passages in his writings lead to the inference that he was born in the city of Enkhuizen, in North Holland. He became a rolling stone, and was strongly influenced by the adventurous spirit of his age and country. He wrote verses as a pastime. He was for fifteen years in the service of the Dutch West India Company. After terminating his engagement with this organization he went to New Netherland. In 1652 he purchased a farm at Amersfoort (Flatlands), and in the following year a house and lot on Pearl Street and another on Broadway, New Amsterdam, besides a farm at Maspeth. His name occurs in the contribution lists for the expenses of the works in defense of New Amsterdam against the Indians in 1653 and 1655. In 1660 he applied to the Director and Council for permission to trade with the west coast of Africa for the importation of slaves.

In 1659 Steendam sent to Holland a short poem which he called "The Complaint of New Amsterdam to her Mother." New Amsterdam, represented as the daughter of Old Amsterdam, complains that she was born in a time of war and had been deserted by her mother. Notwithstanding this maternal neglect, she has grown up a handsome damsel with a fine property. She asks for laborers to till her lands.

This poem is the first known effort in verse in the colony, and is worthy of attention from its historical rather than from its literary interest. By its production Steendam won rank as the first poet of New York, by the same kind of title that makes Sandys the first poet of Virginia and Morrell the first poet of New England.

"The Complaint of New Amsterdam" was followed in 1661 by another poem by Steendam, in the form of a panegyric on New Netherland. It was called "The Praise of New Netherland," and was published in a small quarto form. It is an elaborate description of the natural products of the land. The declining condition of the West India Company had compelled its directors several years before this period to dispose of a portion of their territory on the South River, or Delaware, to the city of Amsterdam. The attempts at colonizing this territory had not been successful. In 1662 a renewed effort for that purpose was made by the burgomasters of the city. A community of persons known as Mennonites was organized for the purpose of settlement on the Delaware. The leader of this enterprise was Peter Cornelison Plockhoy, of Zierikzee in Zeeland, who published in the last-mentioned year a pamphlet entitled "Short and Clear Plan serving as a Mutual Contract to lighten the Labor, Anxiety, and Trouble of All Kinds of Handicraftsmen by the Establishment of a Community or Colony on the South River in New Netherland, comprising

Agriculturists, Seafaring Persons, All Kinds of Necessary Trades-People, and Masters of Good Arts and Sciences, under the Protection of Their High Mightinesses the Lords States-General of the United Netherlands, and particularly under the Favorable Auspices of the Honorable Magistrates of the City of Amsterdam." This high-sounding publication was intended to lead Hollanders to engage in the scheme, and contains, at the end, a number of stanzas by Steendam, entitled "Prickel-Vaersen,"—that is, spurring-verses, or lines to urge or spur on the friends of the undertaking. In this piece, which is a generalization of what the poet had already written in the "Praise of New Netherland," and which neither in its style nor in the occasion which produced it possesses the merit of the two other pieces, he speaks of his personal knowledge of the country. As the agreement between Plockhoy and the city of Amsterdam was dated in June, 1662, and the colonists were to sail in September, which was probably some time after the publication of the pamphlet (as that was to be circulated for the purpose of obtaining more associates), it is almost beyond question that Steendam was in Amsterdam at the time the pamphlet appeared: if so, he may have been there on the publication of the "Praise of New Netherland" in the preceding year. He certainly had left the colony in 1663, as we find a minute, in the records of April in that year, of a petition presented to the Director and Council by attorney, in his name, for leave to fence in his land at Maspeth Kil. But his retaining the ownership of that property leads us to believe that, though he had gone to Holland, he had not abandoned his residence in the colony, but intended to return. The interest he seems to have taken in promoting emigration from Holland to the colony at this period, as shown by "The Praise of New Netherland" and the stanzas in Plockhoy's book, adds strength to this conclusion. But he did not return to New Netherland. The storm which had been so long gathering over the heads of the colonists was now ready to burst, and in the following year the English took possession of the colony in the name of the Duke of York. Then Steendam gave up the country which he had sought to save from its impending fate, and, true to that law of his nature which led him ever to seek his fortune beyond the seas, embarked from Amsterdam in 1665 for the East Indies. Few traces of him occur after this period, but such as are found show that he lived for a time at Batavia. There is a fine portrait of Cornelius Speelman, engraved by A. Blooteling and dated at Batavia, 10th December, 1670, with a stanza of six lines signed "Jacob Steendam, noch vaster." A manuscript memorandum on a portrait of Steendam states that in 1671 he was *vader*, or superintendent, of the Orphan House at Batavia.

Edward S. Van Zile.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

Ripple and Flood.
By James Prior.

New novels are common enough, but this new novel of Prior's is most uncommon, having a strong and sweet individuality.

By *Ripple and Flood*, the latest of *Lippincott's Series of Select Novels*, will afford genuine delight to any reader who appreciates clear diction, true sentiment, and the artist's intimacy with all outdoors.

The story is told in the first person, as the recollections of the narrator. He begins with the earliest memories of his childhood, when Edward Allius, the orphan, as he believed himself to be, lived alone with a rough and silent uncle. The boy always loved color, whether he found it in an apple or in the evening sky, and he would sit for hours on the river bank watching the lights and shades of the water. His life was peculiarly lonely, but none the less happy, for his was a nature which had resources within itself and did not seek companionship. There was one school-mate, however, whom he could not avoid, try as he might. This was a wild, gypsy-like girl, who was attracted by his fearlessness and stanch integrity, and who became his unwelcome shadow. Another person who influenced his life very greatly was a mysterious, mournful man who sought shelter at his uncle's one stormy night and became thenceforth a member of the small household. It was he who gave Edward his first instruction in drawing, and who encouraged the passion for portraying on paper the forms he saw around him.

There is fine action in the description of the frightful flood, with its drownings and escapes, and in the revelation of the tragedy of his uncle's existence, followed by his own flight to the city; but nothing in the book is more touching or more real than the sensations of the young artist upon his return to the cottage, the meadows, and the river where his childhood had been passed and where Fate had ordained that his life's romance was to mature.

Doctor Luttrell's First Patient. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.

All who have read Rosa Nouchette Carey's charming novel *The Mistress of Brae Farm* will welcome with sincere pleasure yet another tale from her industrious pen.

Doctor Luttrell's First Patient is a very pretty picture of "the patience of a great and enduring affection," which can make sunshine in a shady place and even persuade peace and poverty to keep company. The crisis in the young doctor's career is brought about by an accident. His wife helps a rich old gentleman who has fallen ill in the street, supports him to his home, and sends for her husband. This first paying patient proves to be but the beginning of the fine practice for which the brave couple had fondly hoped. How the cheery little wife wins the morose old gentleman's stanch admiration, how she is the means of restoring to him his long-lost son, and how her dearest friend turns out to be the sweetheart of the son,—all this, and more, makes a refreshing romance, which is prettily bound and offered to the public by the J. B. Lippincott Company.

Guavas the Tinner.
By S. Baring-Gould.

All the fascination and subtle fear linked with the subject of folk-lore centres about the name of Baring-Gould. He more than any other contemporary has brought into the shadowy avenues of romance the real superstitions, the absolute facts, of the lore of our English forebears, and his mastery as an author united with his knowledge as a scholar renders him irresistible as a story-teller. His last book, which appears in *Lippincott's Series of Select Novels*, is entitled *Guavas the Tinner*. It takes the reader to Dartmoor in West England in the days of Elizabeth, when that remote district had hardly emerged from the practices of barbarism. Tin had been mined there from the Roman occupation, and the stannars were a numerous, industrious, and self-willed people. The natives hated an intruder, and they were especially bitter against Guavas, who, as a Cornishman, had taken a "pitch" which proved of unusual richness and refused to divide his product with his neighbors. He was allured by an enemy in disguise into selling gold, which was under the ban, to a Jew, and by a miscarriage of justice he was "knifed" through his uplifted hand to a post, his other hand being bound behind him. His tame wolf would have rent him to pieces upon scenting his blood had he not been released at the crisis by Isolt, the barge-master's daughter, who had a strange tenderness for him.

How the misused tinner passes through his conflict of sentiments for Isolt and the fair Lemonday and how he overcomes his enemies must not be anticipated; suffice it to say that a better piece of literature has rarely left the Lippincott press, and that its almost elemental characters stand out like the personages of Ossian, save that they are far more human and lovable. *Guavas* is a noble type almost of scriptural character.

The Light that Lies.
By Cockburn Harvey.
New Edition.

Those who remember *The Light that Lies*, by Cockburn Harvey, will recall it with a sense of amused appreciation; those who did not read it will be eager to secure it in the new and cheap edition in which it now appears from the Lippincott press. It is a bright, vivacious sketch of the ante-hymeneal difficulties of Mr. Merton, and is really a little comedy in light prose. Its pictures are as jocund as its text. Its title comes from Tom Moore:

The light that lies
In woman's eyes
Has been my heart's undoing.

*Mrs. Crichton's
Creditor.* By Mrs.
Alexander.

There is not a single element of dulness in the pen of Mrs. Alexander: hence every habitué of the walks of fiction picks up its product with a keen sense of security from ennui. Her tale called *Mrs. Crichton's Creditor* is not a long story, but it is a pointed, well-plotted, and delightful novelette in which good English society deports itself entertainingly. The hero is Lieutenant Norman Adair, R.N., who has just come into a fortune and is up in London to see his attorneys and enjoy the town. He meets an old playmate at a dinner who is married to Mr. Crichton, a rich and rather vulgar person who has the instincts of a miser. Adair sympathizes with Constance, and through memories of childhood and rumors of her present unhappiness his sentiments grow dangerously near to love. When Crichton is suddenly killed in a street accident the way is clear for a fulfilment of his dreams, and the reader will thank fate for taking off the unlovely obstacle.

Cook Book Free

Our book of 400 selected receipts by practical housekeepers, for practical housekeepers, will be mailed to any one on receipt of stamp and address

CLEVELAND BAKING POWDER CO.
83 Fulton Street, New York.

IT CONTAINS:

Soups,	14	receipts	Pies,	18	receipts
Oysters and Fish,	14	"	Desserts,	32	"
Meats,	21	"	Cake,	60	"
Vegetables,	22	"	Breakfast Breads } and Cakes,	41	"
Welsh Rarebit, etc.,	5	"	Pickles,	9	"
Entrees,	17	"	Preserves and Jellies,	6	"
Salads,	14	"	Beverages,	5	"
Fish and Meat } Sauces,	7	"	Candy,	2	"
Puddings,	39	"	For Invalids,	14	"
" Sauces,	10	"	Additional Receipts,	50	"

WORTH SENDING FOR.

"One of the best receipt books for everyday use in the kitchen that we have ever seen is that published by the Cleveland Baking Powder Company, New York, and mailed free to those who request it and send stamp.

"It is a pamphlet of 78 pages and contains four hundred selected receipts for soup, fish, meats of all kinds, breakfast breads, biscuit, plain and fancy cake, puddings, dessert, beverages, food for the sick, etc.

"The book also contains specially contributed receipts by Marion Harland, Miss Maria Parloa, Mrs. S. T. Rorer, Mrs. D. A. Lincoln, Mrs. Eliza R. Parker, and nearly fifty other leading teachers of cookery and writers on Domestic Science.

"We advise all our readers to send for a copy. Send address with stamp to Cleveland Baking Powder Co., New York."—*Christian Intelligencer*.

SHAKESPEARE'S INDIFFERENCE TO FAME.—Shakespeare never took any trouble to hand himself down to fame and posterity. Superbly indifferent to renown, writing only as the sun shines and as the winds blow,—because it was the work he was created for,—he dashed off those marvellous productions, and when they had accomplished their object of paying his current expenses and pleasing the public of his time he retired to Stratford-on-Avon, utterly careless, as it seems, whether his splendid plays lived in the memories of men or died out of recollection. It was part of his royal and lofty nature, this large indifference, so grandly contrasted with the modern yearning to be advertised, the latter-day ache to be lauded and remembered.—*London Chronicle*.

DECREASE IN AMPUTATIONS.—Fewer limbs are amputated nowadays than was the case ten years ago. Such, at any rate, is the result of the large experience gained at the University College Hospital, London. Surgical operations have increased by fifty per cent., but they have become more conservative, and every new application of surgical science is devoted to saving limbs and other parts which in 1883 there would have been no option but to cut off. At the same time the mortality has greatly decreased, owing to improved methods of operating and better sanitation and nursing. In 1875-76 no less than thirteen per cent. of all operations performed were amputations, but the proportion has since gradually dropped to a little more than two per cent.—*Exchange*.

TENNYSON DISLIKED VENICE.—The Tennysons, after their marriage, settled at Twickenham, and among the earliest of the poet's friends who met his wife was Spedding, who was charmed with her. The same year Carlyle met Tennyson and his bride at Trent Lodge in Cumberland. Soon afterward the newly-married pair were in Italy, and of this journey one amusing story is told. Lord John Russell gave a large reception, at which the Tennysons were present, and during the evening the prime minister asked the poet how he had enjoyed his visit to Venice. As Tennyson did not appear communicative, his host pressed him further, when he confessed that he had not liked Venice. "And why not, pray, Mr. Tennyson?" "I couldn't get any English tobacco there for love or money," was the poet's reply.—*Westminster Gazette*.

LOGS AND MEALERS.—A summer visitor in Mount Desert fell into conversation with a native who was busily engaged in doing nothing. "How in the world do you manage to make a living here?" inquired the summer visitor when the conversation had become somewhat confidential. "Waal, stranger," said the native, slowly, "there ain't anything to make hereabouts, true to say. But, ye see, in winter I haul logs, an' in summer I haul mealers, an' 'twixt them two I manage to scrape along." "Mealers?" repeated the visitor, doubtfully. "Cottage folks that take their meals to the hotels an' ain't got strength to walk half a rod," explained the native. "Ah! And which do you enjoy better, summer or winter?" inquired the summer visitor. "Weather don't trouble me, one way nor 'nother," replied the native, "but when you come to haulin'—well, I dunno. Logs is harder to h'ist, there ain't any two ways about that; but when you get 'em h'isted, there they be. An' there's no high-heeled shoes nor trailin' skirts to a log to ketch. I reckon, on the whole, logs is just about as payin' an' considerable less precarious than mealers."—*National Hotel Reporter*.

THE
PROPER
AMMUNI-
TION
with which to
resist dirt is
SAPOLIO



Whether you write
or send, or ask for
it, insist on getting
SAPOLIO.



McGraw.

QUEER.—A recent issue of the London *Times* contained the following unique advertisement: "Young lady required as governess for one little girl, aged ten. As she has unhappily lost a leg, it is considered possible that more sympathy will be shown by a lady in a similar position. Preference, therefore, given to such."

HUNTING THE POLAR BEAR.—At seven we continued our journey in calm, hazy weather. We had barely travelled two hours before, on turning a headland, we suddenly espied the bear some eight hundred yards in front of us. At racing pace the dogs sped away across the hard snow, but the bear did not take long to consider his position and then to deal with it. He decided not to deal with the dilemma at all, and simply bolted. But we were down upon him, when Kolotengva quickly cut the single trace of the eight dogs, the sledge stopped dead, and the liberated dogs flew with redoubled energy at the hairy giant, who now turned to defend himself at last. During the short space of time occupied by us in coming up with the combatants I had a good opportunity of watching the splendid tactics of the dogs. As soon as they came up with the bear they spread out in a semicircle right in front of their foe and attacked him by making dashes at his long, thick coat with their sharp, glistening teeth, and they displayed during these proceedings such a 'cuteness' and skill that it was evident they quite understood that it was a question of "breakfast or no breakfast" for them.

Whenever the bear angrily raised one of his huge paws to crush one of his tormentors the latter slid away in the most agile manner, while his companions gave the wretched brute enough to attend to in another direction. However, a few shots from our Winchesters soon ended the combat, and an hour later we had the large, magnificent bear-skin safely packed on the sledge, together with a good quantity of meat, while the dogs were treated to a substantial meal, which they indeed wanted badly, and we again continued our journey.—*Fortnightly Review*.

WORKING OFF OLD STOCK.—"I'm going to tell my pa on you," said Johnny Smithers, as the blacksmith pared some of the bone away from the horse's hoof.

"Why, what have I done?" asked the blacksmith.

"You 'ain't got shoes to fit Dobbin, an' you're whittlin' off his feet to suit those you have got."—*London Telegraph*.

THE "AUTOCRAT" HEARS A PREACHER.—I heard this notorious preacher (Irving) the other Sunday. He is a black, savage, saturnine, long-haired Scotchman, with a most Tyburn-looking squint to him. He said nothing remarkable that I remember, and I should suppose owes much of his reputation to a voice of great force and compass, which he managed nearly as well as Macready. The charlatan he most resembles is Mr. —, whose yell is, however, instinct with a profounder expression of vulgarity and insolence. Mr. Irving and his flock have given up the unknown tongue, and confine themselves to rolling up their eyes so as to show the whites in a formidable manner. I would ask for no better picture than has been presented by these poor enthusiasts, drunk with their celestial influences and babbling paltry inanities.—*Life and Letters of Dr. Holmes*.

33d Annual Statement of the TRAVELERS INSURANCE COMPANY.

Chartered 1863. (Stock.) Life and Accident Insurance.

JAMES G. BATTERSON, President.

Hartford, Conn., January 1, 1897.

PAID-UP CAPITAL, - - \$1,000,000.00

ASSETS.

Real Estate	\$1,953,756.09
Cash on Hand and in Bank	1,462,133.26
Loans on Bond and Mortgage, Real Estate	5,377,156.02
Interest Accrued, but not Due	203,121.89
Loans on Collateral Security	714,150.00
Loans on this Company's Policies	936,342.31
Deferred Life Premiums	291,855.47
Premiums Due and Unreported on Life Policies	255,503.67
State, County, and Municipal Bonds	3,361,078.92
Railroad Stocks and Bonds	3,767,171.00
Bank Stocks	1,084,966.00
Miscellaneous Stocks and Bonds	1,480,370.00

Total Assets..... **\$20,896,684.63**

LIABILITIES.

Reserve, 4 per cent., Life Department	\$15,581,585.00
Reserve for Re-insurance, Accident Department	1,311,974.40
Present Value of Matured Instalment Policies	354,570.00
Special Reserve for Contingent Liabilities	286,651.98
Losses Unadjusted and not Due, and all other Liabilities	405,478.89

Total Liabilities..... **\$17,920,260.27**

Surplus to Policy-holders..... **\$2,976,424.36**

STATISTICS TO DATE.

Life Department.

Number Life Policies Written	90,479
Life Insurance in Force	\$88,243,267.00
New Life Insurance written in 1896	11,941,012.00

Insurance issued under the Annuity Plan is entered
at the commuted value thereof, as required by law.

Returned to Policy-holders in 1896	1,228,077.90
Returned to Policy-holders since 1864	11,914,765.18

Accident Department.

Number Accident Policies Written	2,338,186
Number Accident Claims Paid in 1896	14,163
Whole Number Accident Claims Paid	292,379
Returned to Policy-holders in 1896	\$ 1,373,936.96
Returned to Policy-holders since 1864	19,828,189.13

Returned to Policy-holders in 1896	\$ 2,602,014.86
Returned to Policy-holders since 1864	31,742,954.31

JOHN E. MORRIS, Acting Secretary. **GEORGE ELLIS, Actuary.**

EDWARD V. PRESTON, Sup't of Agencies.

J. B. LEWIS, M.D., Surgeon and Adjuster. **SYLVESTER C. DUNHAM, Counsel.**

ERA OF ACTIUM.—The “era of Actium,” adopted during the early days of the Roman empire, commemorates the great victory gained by Octavius over the troops of Antony and Cleopatra, January 1, B.C. 30. It was often used among the Romans both in writing and colloquially, just as in England people speak of events as occurring before or after the conquest, or as persons in this country frequently refer to events as having happened before or after the war.

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF COLOR.—I have selected Shakespeare's “Sonnets” as his most personal utterance, and “Venus and Adonis” as a characteristic youthful poem, avoiding the plays, in which the coloring might be held to be largely of the scene-painting order.

I believe this selection is fairly comparable with Marlowe's work. The Sonnets give very different results from the longer poem; they are much severer in color, black and yellow predominating, while in “Venus and Adonis” there is a profusion of red and white, with very little black or yellow. It is easy to gain a view of Shakespeare's color generally by turning to a good concordance, such as Schmidt's “Shakespeare's Lexicon.” He appears, speaking roughly, to use red epithets about eighty times to fifty times that he uses green, if we exclude numerous cases in which he uses green without any reference to color.

Shakespeare's use of color is very extravagant, symbolical, often contradictory. He plays with color, lays it on to an impossible thickness, uses it in utterly unreal senses to describe spiritual facts. Colors seem to become colorless algebraic formulæ in his hands. It may safely be said that no great poet ever used the colors of the world so disdainfully, making them the playthings of a mighty imagination, only valuing them for the emphasis they may give to the shapes of his own inner vision. In his use of color Shakespeare bears witness to his belief in Prospero's philosophy, and counts the external world as but a gay, insubstantial fabrie, a mere Japanese house set up over a volcano, and, though he seems well pleased to live there, he is sometimes tempted to thrust his fist through the walls.—*Contemporary Review*.

HE DIDN'T BELIEVE IT.—“Stranger,” he said to the traveller who had stopped at his unpretentious home for a night's lodging, “hev ye ever hearn tell ez how ef ye see a red-headed girl ye're boun' to see a white hoss?”

“Of course. That's an old idea.”

“I hearn it some time ago myself.”

“It has some basis of fact, too. You see, the case simply is that there are more white horses in existence than there are red-haired girls. So their appearing at the same time is a more than likely coincidence.”

“Well, sir,” replied the householder, in a tone that defied controversy, “you kin call it a cerincidence, er what ye please. I call it a durn lie. See that gal over there?”

“Yes.”

“Her hair's red, ain't it?”

“It's—it's quite auburn.”

“It's red, that's a dead sure thing, an' I ain't ashamed of it. She's my wife. The day before I married her I had one of the purtiest white hosses ye ever laid yer eyes onto. Hoss-thief come along while the preacher was a-pronuncin' the ceremony. I've got the red-headed girl, but I 'ain't seen no white hoss sence. An', what's more, I don't expect ter see none.”—*Washington Star*.



Dyspepsia and Indigestion.....

There are times when the brain draws so upon our vitality that we cannot digest our food, we can get no strength from what we eat. If we let this go on, we sow the seeds of weakness which will blossom in disease. Read this letter about

PABST MALT EXTRACT The "Best" Tonic.

If you are a brain worker, a woman with household worries and cares, or if you need physical strength to fight the battles of life,

act at once.

"I cannot be too grateful for the immense improvement PABST MALT EXTRACT, the "Best" Tonic, has made in my system. Two years ago I was a dyspeptic wreck of fifty, but PABST MALT EXTRACT, The "Best" Tonic, has turned me into a young woman. It not only cured my dyspepsia, but it has healed my nerves and cured me completely of insomnia. I consider that it has saved my life. It has changed a nervous, broken down wreck of fifty-two to a strong, fresh young man of forty. When my daughter was recovering from typhoid fever, she gained nearly a pound a day for three weeks, solely by the liberal use of your decidedly "Best" Tonic.

JOHN D. HOMER, Haywards, Cal.

THE FIRST
INAUGURATION

ASK FOR
"PABST"

PERFECTION
IN BREWING
IS REACHED
IN AMERICA

BINNER CHICAGO

CHINESE BANK-NOTES.—The oldest bank-notes are the “flying money,” or “convenient money,” first issued in China 2697 B.C. Originally these notes were issued by the treasury, but experience dictated a change to the banks under government inspection and control. The notes were printed in blue ink on paper made from the fibre of the mulberry-tree. One issued in 1399 B.C. is still carefully preserved in the Asiatic Museum at St. Petersburg.—*St. Louis Republic.*

RUNNING THE CATARACT.—Descending the first cataract of the Nile is a perilous proceeding. The sides of the rapids are walled with solid but not smooth rock, and the water is thrown with frightful impetuosity from either side toward the middle. At every few yards there springs up diagonally a huge wave, and as these side waves meet they form a series of still larger ones, which go in deep and heavy ridges toward the bottom. In “The Nile without a Dragoman,” Mr. Frederic Eden describes his experience in running this cataract in a dahabeah, or house-boat:

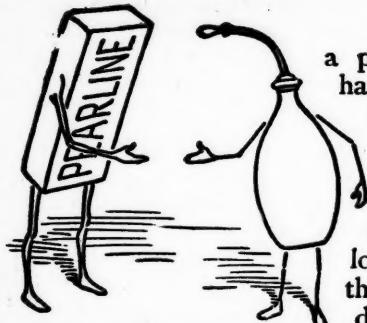
“The chattering men were one and all impressed to silence. A moment more, and our boat was rapidly running along the central ridge of water. The men strained with their utmost force at the oars. A few seconds more, and the vessel began to bound under us in a way I hope never to feel repeated. Each wave, as it struck under the stern, drove her already too depressed head still deeper into the water.

“In the waves came, leaping into the bow, and up they went over the rowers, rendering their oars useless and threatening to drive the boat bodily under. Down we plunged, and when we should have made the turn to the right the largest wave of all hurled us forward so straight that we made full at the wall of rock in front. Before we could touch it, another wave struck sideways on the stern of the boat, and, washing up over the deck of the cabin, turned us short round. For an instant we were within a foot of the rock; then the eddy drifted us round till we lay with our head up-stream.

“A yell of delight broke from every one.”

THE FLOWERS OF THE TREE.—It has come about that the lowly plants, unable to secure their ends by fair words, have had recourse to guile,—to tempt the insects by velvety textures of rich color widely spread, by exhaling sweet and powerful odors, by offering nectar, and finally by devising artful appliances, whereby an insect can be loaded with pollen without his knowledge what time he is imbibing the seductive nectar. Some have gone a step lower, and, because they could not afford to produce so brilliant a display as other plants, have set to work to press the vulgar carrion-loving flies into their service by developing petals of a livid purple hue and giving forth a putrid odor. Faugh! Shall hearts of oak and beech and ash stoop to such tricks?

The forest tree has a hundred or a thousand years to live, and exhibits no precocious anxiety to produce fruit. At fifteen, twenty, or thirty years is time enough to think of such things; and when the time comes the delicate essential organs are protected merely by a few simple green or yellow scales, or by none at all. The pollen is lavishly produced, for the wind is not so precise a vehicle of transmission as the insect, and but a very small percentage of the pollen-grains will reach their destination. This, however, is of little consequence, for an incipient seed needs but one pollen-grain to fertilize it, and should a hundred fall upon it, ninety-nine would be superfluous.—*Good Words.*



This is what

a prominent physician says: "I have given my own children the benefit of very careful study in the matter of absolute cleanliness in bottle feeding. I have studied the so-called easily-cleaned nursing bottles, and I long ago came to the conclusion that a little Pearline would render ordinary nursing bottles the

safest utensils of them all. I firmly believe that children properly fed and cleanly fed will avoid the majority of the difficulties which they encounter during the first two years of life. I believe that if every feeding bottle was washed with Pearline, many innocent lives would be saved."

Surely, this is a matter to interest every mother. Nothing so thoroughly cleanses as Pearline.

546

Millions  **Pearline**

PROVIDENT LIFE AND TRUST CO.

OF PHILADELPHIA.

Attention is directed to the new Instalment-Annuity Policy of the Provident, which provides a fixed income for twenty years, and for the continuance of the income to the widow for the balance of her life, if she should survive the instalment period of twenty years.

In everything which makes Life Insurance perfectly safe and moderate in cost, and in liberality to policy-holders, the Provident is unsurpassed.

DON'T WORRY YOURSELF and don't worry the baby; avoid both unpleasant conditions by giving the child pure, digestible food. Don't use solid preparations. *Infant Health* is a valuable pamphlet for mothers. Send your address to the New York Condensed Milk Company, New York.

SLEEP FOR DYSPEPTICS.—If dyspeptics would observe caution in regard to taking rest before eating, it would materially aid their digestive powers. It is a good plan for the dyspeptic to take a daily nap. Sleep is food for the nerves; therefore not only is the daily nap excellent, but early hours should be observed, so that there be sufficient sleep to restore and invigorate the system.

AFRICA AND HISTORY.—The popular notion in Europe is that any white army, once landed in Asia or Africa, can go anywhere and do anything; that it can cut through a colored army as a knife cuts through cheese; that, in truth, the colored races, when seriously tackled, have no permanent resisting power. That conclusion, now fully adopted, so that it is one of the common bases of thought and is scarcely discussed even by statesmen, is absolutely contrary to the teaching of the world's history. The white men have struggled to subjugate their darker "brethren" for four thousand years, and up to the middle of the last century had effected absolutely nothing beyond a small lodgement on the nearly uninhabited extremity of Southern Africa.

The dark men, after a short period of humiliation, defeated or absorbed the Greeks. They first stopped and then conquered the Romans, and in the wonderful protracted battle which we call the Crusades, and which lasted one hundred and seventy years, they defeated the picked chivalry of Europe, sustained though the white men were by a lavish expenditure of life and by the deepest intensity of religious conviction and excitement. So complete was their defeat that the white men, though always supreme at sea, actually lost Syria, Egypt, and the whole of Northern Africa, once as civilized as Italy and as completely a white possession.—*London Spectator*.

ORIGIN OF THE TERM "STRAW BAIL."—The origin of the familiar phrases "straw bail" and "a man of straw" is a most curious one. It dates back two hundred years, when the practice of entering worthless bail was common. The exact methods have not been transmitted to posterity, but in several old English works is to be found reference to them. In one of these—Fielding's "Life of Jonathan Wild," the thief-catcher—we read that Jonathan's aunt married a man "who was famous for so friendly a disposition that he was bail for above a hundred persons in one year. He had also the remarkable honor of walking in Westminster Hall with a straw in his shoe." It seems that at one time when English lawyers wished to procure witnesses with elastic consciences or men who would go bail for their clients, they went into Westminster Hall, into which the principal courts of law opened, and there would quickly recognize the men they wanted by glancing at their shoes, from which protruded a straw or two, thus indicating their calling. Because of this trade-mark, so to speak, these professional witnesses or bail-goers became known as "men of straw," or ones who were willing, for a consideration, to enter "straw bail."—*Philadelphia Ledger*.

GENEROUS JOHNNY.—"Which would you rather, Johnny," asked the fond mother, "have the measles and stay at home or be well and go to school?"

"Rather have the measles and stay at home; but then I'd like to go to school too," said Johnny.

"But why, darling?" urged his mother.

"So I could give all the other fellows the measles," answered the generous boy.—*Detroit Free Press*.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR A LIMITED TIME TO READERS OF LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE.

For 13 trade-marks from the outside wrappers of either *laundry size* DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX, or *laundry size* DOBBINS ELECTRIC SOAP, or 20 trade-marks from the *small size* DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX or DOBBINS ELECTRIC SOAP, we will give a portfolio entitled

"BEAUTIFUL PARIS."

This superb work of art is in 12 portfolios, 16 pages, $13\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches in each portfolio. Photographs full-page size that cost \$100,000. Nothing like them in the world. A fascinating history of a remarkable people, and a pictorial representation of the most splendid city of the earth. No house should be without the full set of 12 portfolios, and until the edition is exhausted, they will be given absolutely free to users of DOBBINS ELECTRIC and DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX SOAP on receipt of the 13 trade-marks of the *laundry size*, or 20 from the *small size* for each portfolio of 16 pages.

Save your outside wrappers of DOBBINS ELECTRIC SOAP and DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX SOAP until you have 13 *laundry size*, or 20 *small size*, then cut out the trade-marks and mail them to us, and we will send you, postpaid, Portfolio 1. Another 13 or 20 trade-marks, as above, will entitle you to Portfolio 2, and so on until you have received the entire set of 12 Portfolios. In sending for Portfolios, *always* specify which number you received last. They were imported to be given for 20 and 40 wrappers, but for a limited time we reduced them (to all LIPPINCOTT readers) to 13 or 20 wrappers, as above. A handsome case bound in cloth, with gilt letters, to hold the 12 Portfolios, will be sent *free*, with Portfolio No. 12, to those who secure a complete set.

**Dobbins Soap Manufacturing Company,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.**



For Children While Cutting Their Teeth.

An Old and Well-Tried Remedy,

FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS.

MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP

has been used for over FIFTY YEARS by MILLIONS of MOTHERS for their CHILDREN WHILE TEETHING, with PERFECT SUCCESS. IT SOOTHES THE CHILD, SOFTENS the GUMS, ALLAYS all PAIN, CURES WIND COLIC, and is the best remedy for DIARRHEA. Sold by Druggists in every part of the world. Be sure and ask for **Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup**, and take no other kind.

TWENTY-FIVE CENTS A BOTTLE.

A MICHIGAN ROMANCE.—An interesting story by Stanley Waterloo, also containing valuable information about the summer resorts in the North, will be mailed to any address on receipt of four cents to pay postage. Address D. G. Edwards, Passenger Traffic Manager, C. H. & D. Railway, Cincinnati, Ohio.

A DEAL ON THE QUIET.—"One day," said Jay Riall, impresario for the Chicago Opera-House, "I sat in the office of a New York theatrical agent. He was looking for attractions for a vaudeville show, and word to that effect had gone out. To him came a tough-looking little man in checkered clothes, once vociferous, but now subdued by wear of time. The man was accompanied by a dog of somewhat superior appearance. The visitor said he did a tramp act and was assisted therein by the animal. They gave an exhibition of their talents, which was not half bad.

"What are your terms?" asked the agent.

"Sixty dollars a week."

"I'll give you fifteen dollars."

"The imitation tramp—he needed little make-up, for he was close to the real thing—bent a sad, reproachful eye on the agent and backed out of the room, followed by the dog. At once he returned, carefully shutting the door to exclude his partner, who remained in the hall.

"I'll take it," he said. "Where's the contract? I'll have to go you. It's a clean case of push, but for heaven's sake don't mention the price where the dog can hear you."—*Chicago Times-Herald*.

THE SPIDER MONKEY.—In Mrs. Miller's "Four-Handed Folk" is told the story of a pleasant trick played by a spider monkey of Central America who delighted in fun and took measures to obtain her own particular sort of it.

"I was greatly pleased when she was given to me," says the owner of the little creature, "for I had often lingered in my walks to look at her pranks in the place which was then her home.

"The particular thing that had amused me was her fondness for horseback-riding, and the cunning way in which she managed to gratify her taste for that sport at the expense of the pigs that were kept in the same yard. Sitting in perfect silence on the low branch of a tree, she watched her chance, and the moment a pig wandered under her hiding-place she swung herself down and pounced upon him, taking a good grip of his ears to hold by.

"The steed needed no spur. He galloped off at the top of his speed and tore furiously around the yard, evidently not pleased to play horse, but unable to shake her off till she was tired and dismounted herself."

A WARNING TO THE GENTS.—The annual ball of the Occidental Lyceum and Sporting Society was at its height, when the master of ceremonies, a gentleman in full-dress vest and trousers and sack-coat and four breastpins in his shirt-front, vaulted airily into the middle of the ball-room floor and said, with an ominous glitter in his eye,—

"I am informed by some of the ladies present that some of the gents from over Dead Man's Gulch way air jest a little bit too exuberant in carrying out the figgers of the dances, and that when I sing out 'Swing yer duckty daddles!' these gents swing their ladies clear off'n their feet. Now we want things to go off happy and harmonious here to-night, but if any more complaint o' this sort are made some o' the Dead Man's Gulch gents'll be likely to go home on a shutter, ye hear me? Choose yer partners for the next kadrille, an' all set a-standin'!" And they all "set" to the tune of "Granny, Will Yer Dog Bite?"

—*Detroit Free Press*.

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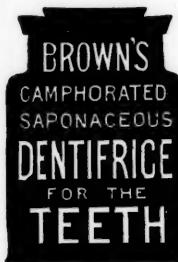
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LIGHTNING REDUCED TO FIGURES.—Modern scientific discovery is fast unravelling the greatest mysteries of nature, and it now appears that there are but few things that are hidden from the gaze of him who looks for them in the proper way. Lightning was formerly one of the greatest enigmas among natural phenomena. To-day we know that the average electromotive force of a bolt of lightning is about three million five hundred thousand volts, that the current is fourteen million amperes, and that the time of discharge is about one twenty-thousandth of a second. In such a bolt there is energy equal to two million four hundred and fifty thousand volts, or three million two hundred and eighty-four thousand one hundred and eighty-two horse-power.—*St. Louis Republic.*

LAVA-CAVES OF THE AZORES.—The formation of caves in a lava-stream is a curious process, and one which the explorer will be interested to realize as his investigations proceed, and in these islands it has some remarkable and perfect illustrations. It will be understood that the stream of molten matter proceeding ordinarily from a volcano soon begins to cool externally as it travels. But with a great stream, say, thirty or forty feet thick, a long time passes before it becomes finally cooled and solid to its centre. A large body of melted lava still remains liquid in its interior, forming as it were a huge conduit or tube full of the white-hot matter. As this accumulates by the continued supply from above, the vast pressure of the liquid on the lower end of the stream increases. The effect may be easily imagined. The solid crust at the front of the flow breaks out, the melted interior rushes on again, and the great tube is emptied of its contents so far as they remain liquid, leaving behind a hollow cavern which may and occasionally does extend for an uninterrupted length of several miles. In the course of centuries subsequent eruptions may deposit new beds of cinder or ash or new streams of lava to any extent above it, but the cave so formed may remain intact.—*Outing*.

THE bustard has a pouch under his chin so capacious as to contain six or seven quarts of water. When suddenly attacked, and with no time for escape, he will turn on his enemies a violent stream from this natural reservoir.

THE CRUEL TRUTH.—Years ago a member of the Indiana legislature, in a brand-new suit of broadcloth and a silk hat, gold-headed cane, and white lawn tie, wandered up into the sanctum of the *Courier-Journal*, stood around in a listless way, looked over the papers, went down-stairs and came back several times. He was asked to take a seat, which he declined elaborately, and ended by drawing his chair in a confidential way up to the “Roundabout” man’s desk.

“Could you,” said he, “put in the paper that I am at the Galt House with my bride, and just fling in something about my being a prominent Indianian? I don’t care anything about this sort of thing myself, but you know how the women are. I want fifty copies of the paper sent to this address.” And he laid down two dollars and fifty cents, grinned, got red in the face, said “Good-morning,” and vanished.

Next morning he read that “Mr. John R. Huckleberry requests us to say that he is at the Galt House with his bride; that he is a prominent member of the legislature of Indiana, and that he himself, personally, cares nothing about newspaper notoriety, but that a society note would be highly gratifying to Mrs. Huckleberry. He added that he wanted fifty copies of the paper for distribution to his constituents.”—*Washington Star*.

HER LITERARY TASTE.—A writer lets out a secret regarding the way in which young women read novels. It was in the car, and two girls were talking of what they read. “Oh, I choose a novel easily enough,” one said. “I go to the circulating library and look at the last chapters. If I find the rain softly and sadly drooping over one or two lonely graves, I don’t have it, but if the morning sun is glimmering over bridal robes of white satin I know it’s all right and take it and start to buy sweets to eat while I read it.”—*Clips*.

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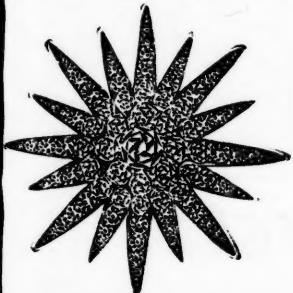
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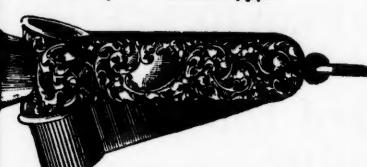
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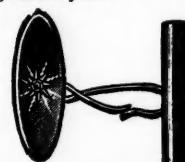
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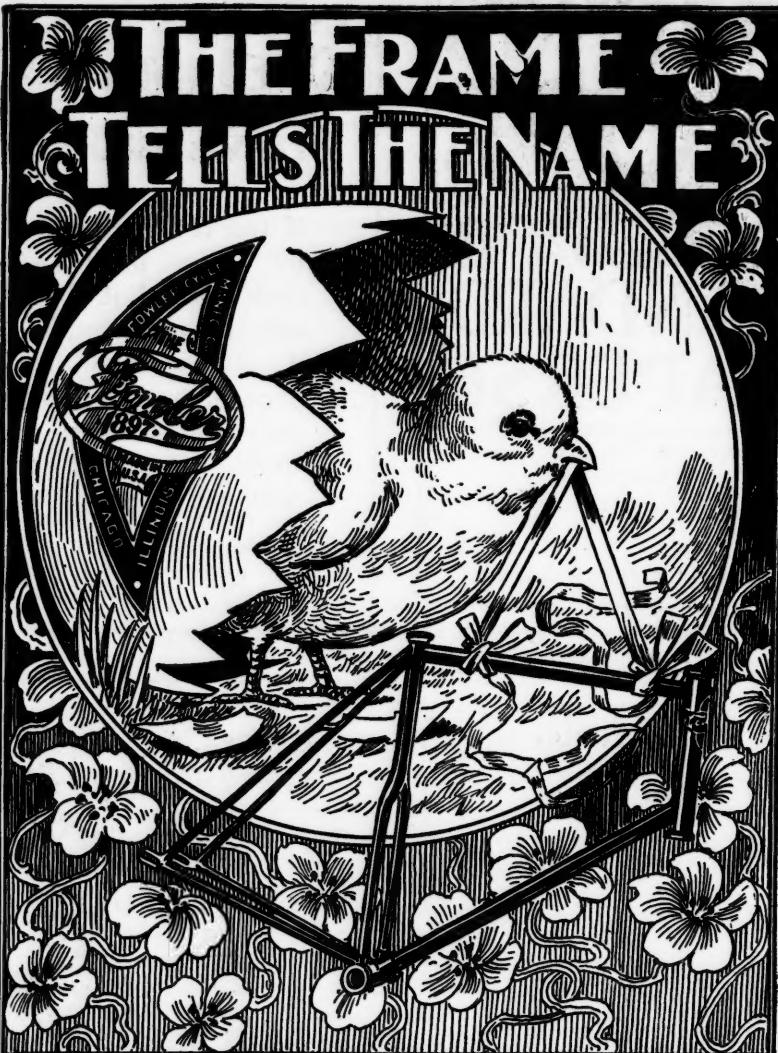


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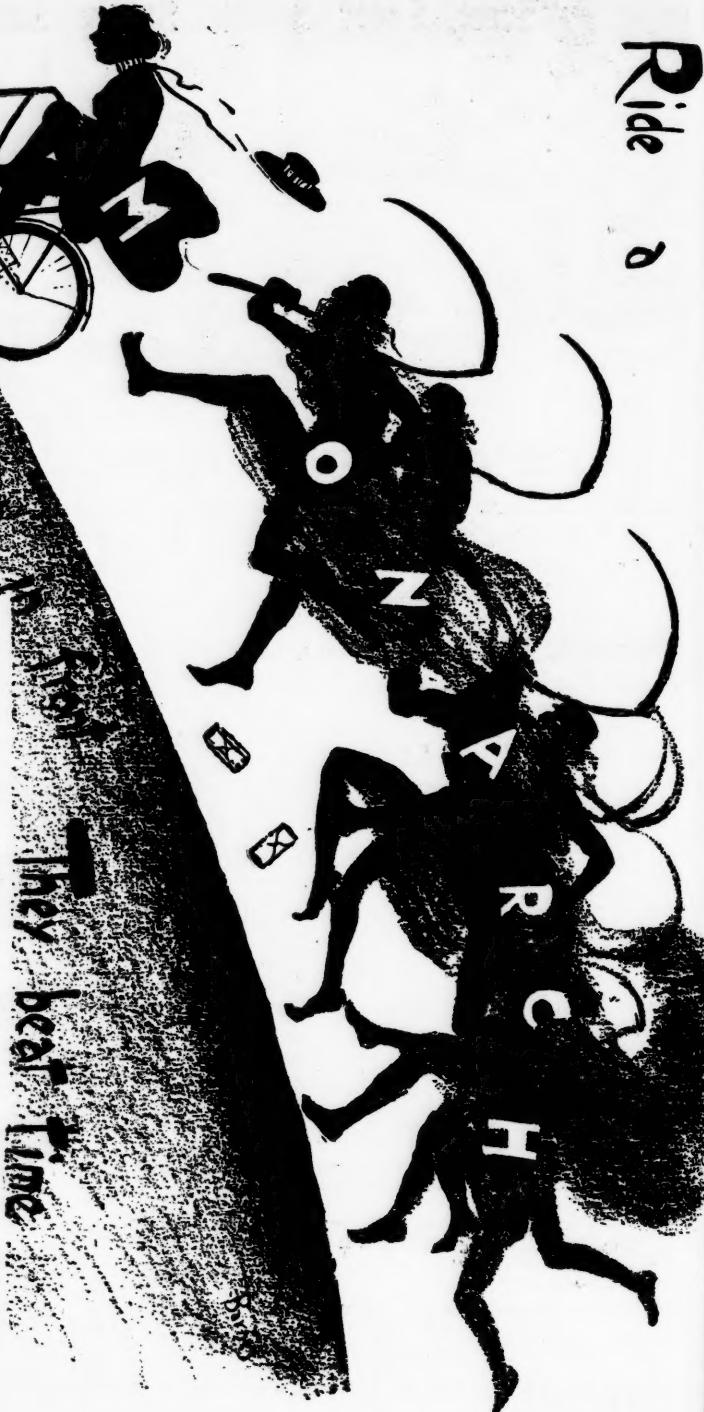
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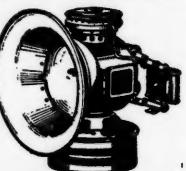
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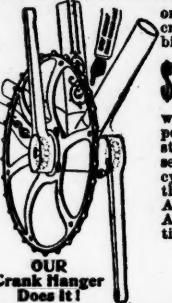
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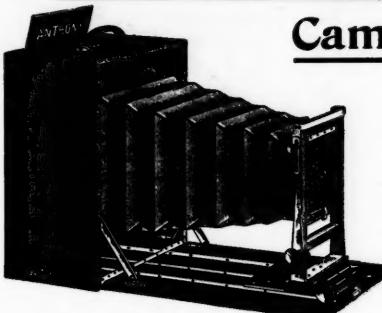
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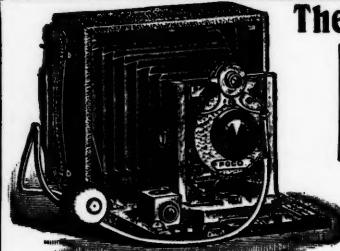
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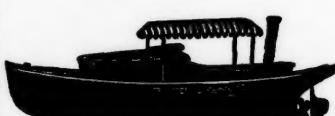
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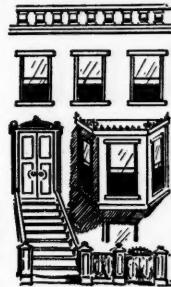
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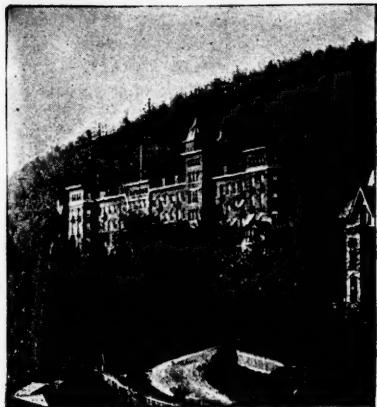
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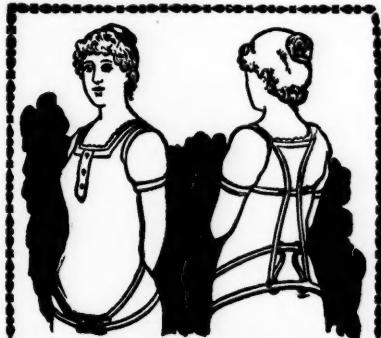


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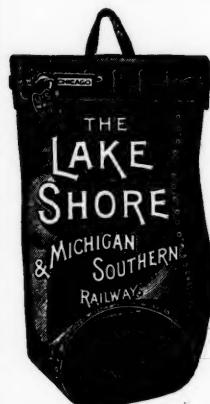
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